

Military Review

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF THE U.S. ARMY

MARCH-APRIL 2020



Fighting Friction at NTC

Schoellhorn, p6

Lightning Strike

Vowell, Scott, and Guelfi, p19

Gap-Crossing Operations

Hosler, p57

Tweeting Terror Live

Fassrainer, p85

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March-April 2020, Vol. 100, No. 2

Professional Bulletin 100-20-03/04

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Military Review (US ISSN 0026-4148) (USPS 123-830) is published bimonthly by the Department of the Army, Army University Press, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1293. Periodical postage paid at Leavenworth, KS, and additional mailing offices.

Yearly paid subscriptions are for \$42 US/APO/FPO and \$58.80 for foreign addresses and are available through the U.S. Government Publishing Office at <https://bookstore.gpo.gov/products/military-review-professional-journal-united-states-army>.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Military Review*, Army University Press, 290 Stimson Ave., Unit 1, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1293.

The Secretary of the Army has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business as required by law of the department. Funds for printing this publication were approved by the Secretary of the Army in accordance with the provisions of Army Regulation 25-30.

By Order of the Secretary of the Army:



KATHLEEN S. MILLER
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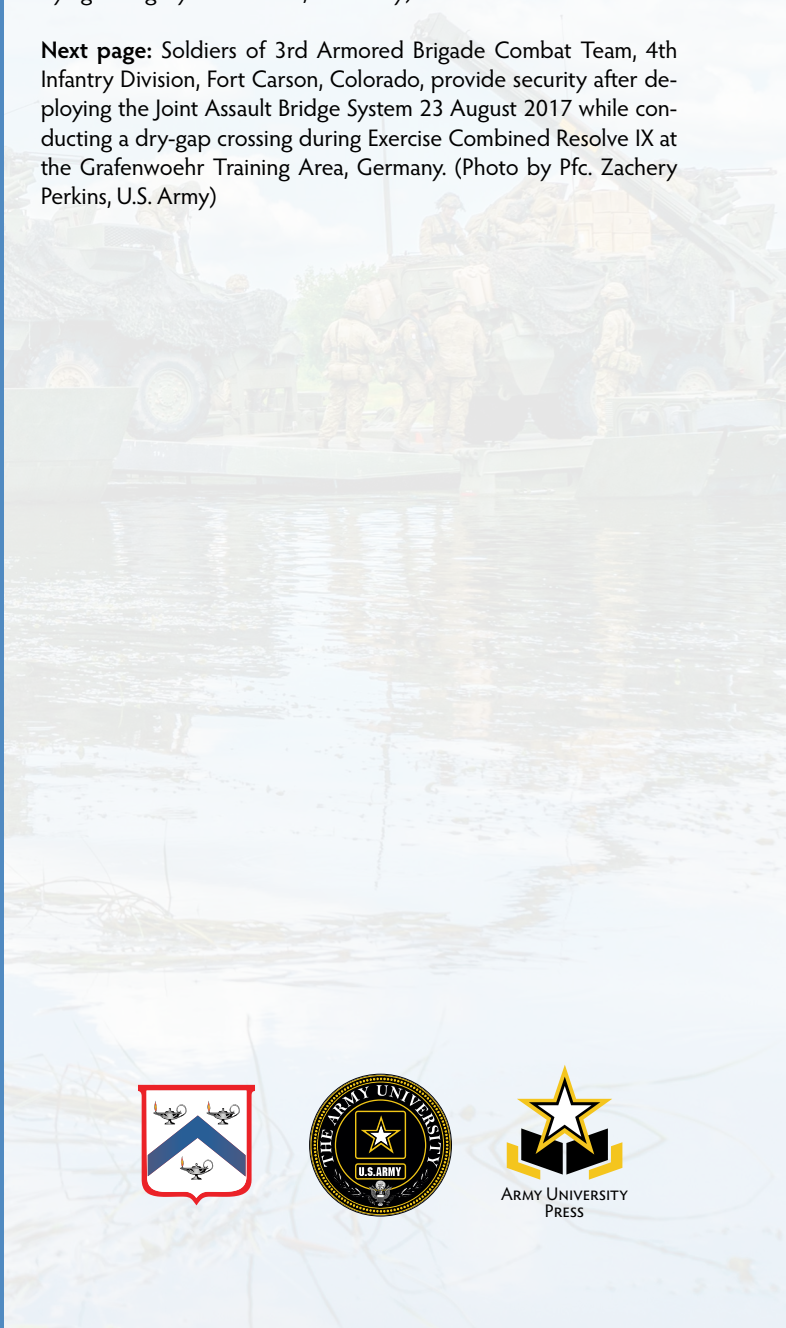
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Cover photo: Elements of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment aboard German M3 Amphibious Bridging Vehicles cross the Nemen River 13 June 2018 during Saber Strike 18 near Kulautuva, Lithuania. (Photo by Sgt. Gregory T. Summers, U.S. Army)

Next page: Soldiers of 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colorado, provide security after deploying the Joint Assault Bridge System 23 August 2017 while conducting a dry-gap crossing during Exercise Combined Resolve IX at the Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany. (Photo by Pfc. Zachery Perkins, U.S. Army)



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Special Topics Writing Competition

This year's theme: "Finding the enemy in 2035—What technological, doctrinal, organizational, or other advances or changes must we make to find our adversaries on the battlefield of the future?"

Articles will be comparatively judged by a panel of senior Army leaders on how well they have clearly identified issues requiring solutions relevant to the Army in general or to a significant portion of the Army; how effectively detailed and feasible the solutions to the identified problem are; and the level of writing excellence achieved. Writing must be logically developed and well organized, demonstrate professional-level grammar and usage, provide original insights, and be thoroughly researched as manifest in pertinent sources.

Contest closes 20 July 2020

1st Place	\$1,000 and publication in <i>Military Review</i>
2nd Place	\$750 and consideration for publication in <i>Military Review</i>
3rd Place	\$500 and consideration for publication in <i>Military Review</i>

For information on how to submit an entry, please visit <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/DePuy-Writing-Competition/>.



6 Preventing the Collapse

Fighting Friction after First Contact at the National Training Center

Lt. Col. Brian P. Schoellhorn, U.S. Army

A former senior trainer at the National Training Center (NTC) describes how the NTC replicates the friction of war and offers recommendations on how leaders can reduce that friction to a manageable level.

19 Lightning Strike

Brig. Gen. Joel B. (J. B.) Vowell, U.S. Army
Maj. Benjamin Scott, U.S. Army
Maj. Edward Guelfi, U.S. Army

The 25th Infantry Division validated its previous success in a Warfighter exercise (WFX) by executing critical WFX events under integrated virtual and live-fire conditions within a multi-domain operations construct during Operation Lightning Strike.

30 We Are Missing Opportunities to Build Sustained, Total Force Readiness inside Brigade Combat Teams

Lt. Col. Nicholas Melin, DPhil, U.S. Army

The author highlights how brigade combat teams (BCTs) are not properly integrating echelons-above-brigade enablers into their formations. He identifies steps BCTs can take to alleviate this readiness gap and offers institutional recommendations for formal, regional alignment of enablers with BCTs and divisions.

39 Death Ignores the Golden Hour

The Argument for Mobile, Farther-Forward Surgery

Lt. Col. Brian C. Beldowicz, MD, U.S. Army
Maj. Michael Bellamy, DO, U.S. Army
Maj. Robert Modlin, U.S. Army

Three medical experts believe the "Golden Hour" paradigm is inadequate for large-scale combat environments, where timely medical evacuation is not guaranteed, and they offer a more deliberate mission-support model that places surgical elements farther forward on the battlefield.

49 Divided We Fall

How the U.S. Force Is Losing Its Joint Advantage over China and Russia

Lt. Col. Dan Sukman, U.S. Army
Lt. Col. Charles Davis, PhD, U.S. Army, Retired

The authors hold that the U.S. military is losing its advantage with respect to joint interoperability, and U.S. military leadership must reverse this trend through a renewed emphasis on joint officer development and a reaffirmed commitment to improving the capability and capacity of the joint force.

57 Gap-Crossing Operations Medieval and Modern

John D. Hosler, PhD

A military historian presents examples of medieval wet-gap crossings from which modern-day tacticians can draw valuable lessons.

66 Utilizing Army Historians in the Operational Force

Capt. Michael Loveland, U.S. Army Reserve

The author asserts that most commanders and staff officers remain woefully ignorant regarding the operational role of historians. He explains how they can leverage the expertise of Army historians as part of everyday operations.

77 "Trans-Rational"

Iran's Transnational Strategy for Dominance and Why It Cannot Survive Great Power Competition

Maj. Scott J. Harr, U.S. Army

Iran trains, supports, and employs a vast network of nonstate, transnational proxies to advance its foreign policy agenda across the Middle East. The author analyzes some of the challenges associated with this approach, draws conclusions about the prospects of Iran's strategy, and offers recommendations for U.S. policy and actions regarding Iran.

85 Tweeting Terror Live

Al-Shabaab's Use of Twitter during the Westgate Attack and Implications for Counterterrorism Communications

Victoria Fassrainer

A specialist in international affairs details the use of live-tweets by al-Shabaab terrorists during their 2013 attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, offers a hybrid theoretical framework for analyzing the group's motivations, and presents her findings from that analysis.

96 Consolidating Gains in Northeast Syria

A Whole-of-Government Approach to Evaluating Civil Authority

Lt. Col. Peter Brau, U.S. Army

In a follow-up article to the previously published "Civil Authority in Manbij, Syria," a civil affairs officer recounts U.S. efforts to help restore normalcy to northeast Syria through interagency coordination and support of local civil councils.

106 Sluss-Tiller Tests the Cultural Competence Special Operations Forces Need

Louise J. Rasmussen, PhD

The author describes cultural competence requirements identified while observing Operation Sluss-Tiller, the culminating exercise for civil affairs students, and considers the effectiveness of the Adaptive Readiness for Culture (ARC) competence model as a tool for evaluating cultural skills.

116 Rethinking Uzbekistan

A Military View

Maj. Daniel J. O'Connor, U.S. Army

Uzbekistan has the potential to take the lead on development in the entire Central Asia region. The author examines the region's geopolitical environment and argues for a closer U.S.-Uzbekistan partnership.

REVIEW ESSAY

130 The Early Air War in the Pacific

Ten Months That Changed the Course of World War II

Lt. Col. Jesse McIntyre III, U.S. Army, Retired

The author critiques a book by Ralph Wetterhahn, an experienced fighter pilot, on aerial combat in the Pacific theater during the early days of World War II.

Suggested Themes and Topics

Large-Scale Combat Operations

- How do we foster deep institutional focus on large-scale combat operations (LSCO)?
- What is the relationship between multi-domain operations and mission command in LSCO? How can they be integrated and synchronized?
- What specific impacts on the Army's renewed emphasis on LSCO training, readiness, and doctrine are to be expected? How does one measure the effectiveness of adjustments in those areas?
- First strike: discuss how hypersonic weapons and other means would be employed by Russia to neutralize/devastate U.S. capabilities in the first stage of a conflict.
- Hypersonic weapons: What is the real threat? How do we defend against them? How do we use them?
- Specifically, what new kinetic threats can we expect to see in LSCO? How do we defend against them? How do we use them?
- How do we survive in hyperlethal engagements where "if you can see it, you can kill it; if you can be seen, you can be killed" (including attacks using weapons of mass destruction)?
- How does one perceive and seize fleeting opportunities in LSCO? What examples are there of fleeting opportunities and temporary advantages that were exploited? Are there repeating characteristics of such events to guide cultivation of future perception training?
- How do we offset "one-off" dependencies and contested domains?
- How do we continually present multiple dilemmas to a peer enemy?
- What must be done to adjust junior leader development to succeed in a modern operational environment?
- What changes are required to the professional development models for officers and noncommissioned officers?
- What logistical challenges are foreseen in LSCO due to infrastructure limitations in potential foreign areas of operation and how can we mitigate them?

- Regarding sustainment and mobilization for LSCO, how should the industrial base change to support LSCO? How does the Army communicate its requirements to industry?
- What rapid training and mobilization is required for COMPO2 and COMPO3 units to "join the fight" and meet deployment requirements?
- Brigade combat teams have the training centers, division headquarters have warfighters, and sustainment brigades sometimes rotate smaller elements to training centers, but how does a division exercise the sustainment function on a large scale?

General Topics

- What training gaps is the U.S. Army facing (e.g., mechanic training, talent management, and retention; large-scale casualty training [medical and G1 functions], etc.)?
- Is there a capability gap in air defense and rocket artillery at lower echelons? Do we need to become a more artillery- and air-defense-centric army?
- Do we need to increase security cooperation exercises in Europe or the Middle East?
- What lessons have we learned from National Guard, Army Reserve, and interagency responses to natural disasters in California or the recent hurricanes?
- How does China's "New Silk Road" initiative compare with the pre-WWII Japanese "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere"?
- Is Russian doctrine changing regarding use of humanitarian assistance as a weapon?
- What are the security threats, concerns, and events resulting from illegal immigration/refugee movements globally?
- What is the role for the Army in homeland security operations especially along our borders? What must the Army be prepared to do in support of internal security?





Preventing the Collapse

Fighting Friction after First Contact at the National Training Center

Lt. Col. Brian P. Schoellhorn, U.S. Army

The commander stepped outside the stuffy command post tent and breathed in the night air as he tried to contain his growing frustration. His staff had just finished an update, painting a grim and incomplete picture of the brigade combat team's (BCT) current state. The commander struggled to understand

what had gone so wrong. The fight had started successfully with air insertions of deep observation posts, seizure of key terrain, and the successful prosecution of enemy targets with indirect fire, attack aviation, and fixed-wing aircraft. In short, the BCT had seized the initiative from the enemy.

An M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle provides security for the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division's tactical operations center 5 April 2019 during the brigade's 19-06 Decisive Action Rotation at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California. (Photo by Maj. Carson Petry, U.S. Army)



That was over thirty-six hours ago. Since then, reporting had ceased, communications had collapsed, and units had repeatedly failed to attain their designated objectives. The cavalry squadron had not yet achieved its planned reconnaissance and security objectives, resulting in repeated surprise attacks and costly penetrations of the BCT's zone. It had gained only two to three kilometers since its initial deployment. The field artillery battalion, which had started so well, had since fired only a few ineffective missions after the initial targets planned for the operation's opening phase. Close air support (CAS) and attack aviation had ceased inflicting the devastating effects of the first day. Combined arms battalions had either stumbled into contact with significant losses for no appreciable gain or had been repeatedly surprised by the enemy in their attack positions. To make matters worse, the brigade support battalion commander had complained to him earlier in the day that every unit was clamoring for "emergency resupply" of all commodities. He had no idea how many casualties the BCT had taken in the recent contacts. Finally, the brigade engineer battalion operated in a constant state of crisis as insurgents and special purpose forces wreaked havoc across the BCT rear area with asymmetrical attacks and deadly accurate indirect fire that seemed to materialize out of nowhere and everywhere.

The BCT tactical operations center (TOC) was faring no better. Although everyone was working frenetically trying to resolve the friction that had ground the BCT to a halt, these efforts had resulted in no greater understanding of the BCT's situation nor had they provided any realistic means to get it moving again. Some staff officers had started pointing to failures at the subordinate level, while others had exceeded their ability to process the multiple simultaneous issues that bombarded the BCT on an hourly basis. Few had slept more than a few fitful hours slumped over at their stations or in their vehicles. This included the BCT commander himself. The attempted "two-minute" update had taken forty-five minutes but made clear that staff running estimates remained wildly inaccurate and incomplete. To make matters worse, the BCT executive officer (XO) had just completed a scratchy and decidedly one-way telephone call with the division operations officer, who demanded that the BCT regain the offensive as soon as possible. The commander was supposed to receive a staff planning update for the operation to seize the provincial capital, but he thought it would merely waste time given the TOC's current state. The commander was unsure how to restore order and resume offensive action akin to that of the first day. It was frustrating and bewildering. What to do?

Introduction

The situation described above happens nearly every month at the National Training Center (NTC). Most BCTs come to the NTC with a solid baseline of training and preparedness for the first day of the fight. They routinely attack the contested reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI) process with alacrity. Many BCT leaders think that their unit is ready to go on the offense as soon as the fourth day of RSOI. No matter how far geographically or fast physically the BCT gets on the first day, however, the initial mission invariably devolves into twenty-four to forty-eight hours of what can be described as a BCT-wide collapse of offensive action.¹ The BCT's subunits and staff make contact with the enemy and are hampered by the terrain, which in turn produces a deleterious effect on time available to continue planning. These inputs compound, producing a level of friction that most units have not experienced in training. Units and staffs enter survival mode, trying desperately to work through the pressing problems in front of them to the detriment of the larger mission. In this situation, reporting, sustainment, communication, and planning break down, leaving battalion and BCT staffs in the dark as to the state of units and their adherence to orders. Any enemy contact reverberates throughout the BCT, causing further confusion. The net result of friction at every level causes a collapse in tempo and offensive action, resulting in paralysis across command posts and attack positions. Why does this happen?

As a reasonable approximation of combat, the NTC induces a level of friction not re-created anywhere else. Home-station training cannot replicate the space, terrain, time, enemy, and stress that the NTC produces at the tactical level. The first forty-eight hours probably represent the first simultaneous deployment of every BCT element at doctrinal distances under combat conditions against an enemy capable of dominating all forms of contact.² In this light, the general collapse of tempo and offensive action is understandable and part of the training process. The first few days also expose the BCT's systems to friction in a way that no other training event short of combat can. In many ways, the most powerful drivers of friction are BCT- and battalion-level staff organization, processes, and procedures. Most staffs are not adequately organized according to plans, current operations (CUOPs), and mobile command group

sections. Even if they are, staff functions rarely remain clearly defined as the BCT makes contact, and everyone tries to understand the current problem to resolve the immediate threat. The BCT often outruns the plan; the staff does not continue planning, and consequently fails to prepare to transition the BCT from one operation to another. In this situation, battalions and companies stumble into unplanned contact with the enemy, unsupported by BCT-level enablers. These independent and desynchronized actions rarely result in BCT-wide offensive action and increased tempo.

Communications difficulties due to range, terrain, load, training deficiencies, and mistakes cause difficulties even understanding what is happening, much less directing actions of subordinate units.³ To resolve this, BCT commanders often resort to understanding and directing the BCT by talking directly to battalion commanders on tactical radios. Although this can prompt action, it often results in plans developed in isolation from staffs and lacking BCT-level enablers. These radio conversations can also generate additional friction as battalion commanders often “talk their way out of” directed tasks because they lack assets, need more time, or their situation (combat power, casualties, sustainment, and communication) prevents continued offensive action.

How to shorten this inevitable loss in tempo is a topic of much discussion at the NTC, and its answer is existential in nature given the enemies and situations we are likely to face throughout the world. The following discussion is meant to spark thought, but it is not a prescriptive guide to resolving the friction inherent in combat.

Know the Collapse Is Coming

One of the main causes of the collapse is physiological. Units, leaders, and soldiers spend RSOI in a heightened state of alert and activity that cuts into sleep and interrupts the normal rhythms of garrison. RSOI at the NTC is designed to help a unit “see itself” in a way not possible in garrison. While enormously beneficial, this process can stress a unit and its leaders as unforeseen problems emerge and must be dealt with quickly, often at the expense of planning, eating, and rest. The planning and preparation for combat, as well as the unit’s exposure to the NTC, Operations Group, and its observer, coach, trainers (OC/Ts), only add to task and time demands, causing further stress. RSOI also introduces the unit to NTC’s contested environment, wherein it

faces insurgent attacks, rocket strikes, and drone swarms, to name only a few forms of contact with which leaders must contend while building combat power. Finally, nervousness, anxiety, adrenaline, and a desire to prove oneself are intermingled to the point that the first twelve to twenty-four hours of action are a release from RSOI and the logistics support area. These emotional and physical conditions closely replicate those of precombat, and if harnessed effectively, can be a positive impetus for aggressive action.⁴ The costs of this heightened state, however, often remain hidden until manifesting themselves across the force in the subsequent twenty-four to forty-eight hours after the first operation.

BCT-level planning for the first attack is regularly the most complete and detailed of the rotation despite some initial unfamiliarity with the environment. OC/T coaching is also the least impactful at this stage since OC/T suggestions are largely theoretical for the unit until after it makes contact. As a result, plans are frequently overly ambitious in their geographical objectives and rarely take the enemy, terrain, and time into full account. Units also invariably fail to consider the amount of friction that their own systems and processes will encounter after first contact. Units deploy, have some success, and gain some ground but inevitably encounter the enemy at a time or place in an unplanned manner. The friction and shock of this first surprise encounter rapidly ripples up from the lowest unit and across the BCT, causing confusion, and routinely, the end of offensive action.

Unit leaders look inward to solve their immediate problems, reporting breaks down, and the BCT ceases to act in concert as reacting to contact consumes its constituent parts. The hyperactivity of the preceding days rapidly turns into fatigue as the stress of initial contact combines with a lack of rest. Sustainment problems swiftly develop in these conditions due to deficiencies in reporting and planning. Additionally,

Lt. Col. Brian Schoellhorn, U.S. Army, is the operations officer for 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, Georgia. He previously served as the brigade combat team senior trainer at the National Training Center. A career armor officer, he has served in command and staff positions in Germany, Kosovo, Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, Alaska, and Fort Carson, Colorado. He commanded 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

training, equipment, and maintenance deficiencies accumulate to cause BCT-wide failures in communications, control, and sustainment.

Countless historical descriptions of first contact, from the phalanx to conflicts today, point to the commonality of this situation in combat.⁵ The adrenaline of preparation, the frenetic activity prior to the mission, followed by the shock of first contact create an unprecedented level of what Carl von Clausewitz described as friction, or the fabled “fog of war” experienced by every commander in conflict and training throughout military history.⁶ The fog of war is often thought of as a lack of information that leads to inaction. However, it is also the multiplication of inputs to the BCT after contact leading to a state of confusion that often results in paralysis and inaction. The NTC can inflict a BCT with every form of contact, stressor, and inducer of friction simultaneously, which compounds the fog of war in the first days. In fact, this is part of its mandate: to replicate the stress of combat in a way that causes the BCT and its soldiers “to have their hardest day in the desert so that they do not go untrained into combat.”⁷

While the fog and friction of the first days of combat cannot be completely eliminated, their time and effect can be reduced. Knowing they are coming and preparing the BCT’s leaders for the physical, mental, and emotional rigors of the first hours and days of the fight is the first step. Physical fitness that results in combat endurance is critical. Training the mind through historical examples in a leader professional development/self-development program will give leaders some context as they think about the trials likely facing them in the first fight. Tactical decision games that focus on actions after the breakdown of the plan and absence of further orders will train junior leaders to think through the fog of war.⁸ Leaders must develop and enforce rest plans throughout RSOI and especially during the first few days of contact, as the body and mind acclimate to the shock and rigors of combat, simulated or otherwise. Finally, leaders must share this understanding with their soldiers, from the most junior to senior levels, through discussion, and more importantly, training.

Lethality is a Necessary but Insufficient Condition for Success

It is a truism that lethal squads, crews, platoons, and companies form the building blocks of victory at NTC and in combat. Although this is undoubtedly the case,

lethality at the small-unit level is necessary but not sufficient to fight through the fog of war. Too often, even the most lethal formations are surprised by the enemy, make contact at an unexpected place and time, and are forced to fight on the enemy’s terms to shore up the situation. Win, lose, or draw, these small-unit actions inescapably result in combat losses that slow the tempo of the company, the battalion, and the BCT, if not immediately followed by a combined arms fight that reinforces success. Observations at NTC also indicate that deficiencies in the science and art of terrain and enemy analysis, and the inability to execute actions on contact at the platoon level contribute to combat losses, even with favorable system-to-system kill ratios.

Platoons and companies rarely take the necessary steps to sufficiently secure themselves in the attack positions in a way that prevents the enemy from surprising them to tactical advantage. They infrequently conduct quartering parties; practice security at a halt; execute local patrolling or stand to/stand down; develop range cards, sector sketches, or platoon fire plans; or the myriad other activities that constitute security.⁹

The enemy inevitably exploits these opportunities and weaknesses. Consequently, a spoiling attack can surprise a unit in a key location, penetrate its position, and wreak havoc throughout the BCT. Platoons and companies do not report in enough detail, eventually leaving the BCT ignorant as to the enemy and friendly situation. Orders are then given without regard or knowledge of the true situation, causing further confusion and disorder. A lack of discipline in field maintenance and during logistic package resupply also causes BCT-wide effects, as units utilize limited assets for “emergency” resupply and maintenance.¹⁰ The wear and tear on sustainment units, systems, and soldiers ultimately contribute to a collapse of tempo.

Preventing the accumulation of small-unit deficiencies that result in BCT-wide problems requires the discipline born of repetitive training. Leaders at the BCT level should never have to order a platoon or company to report, secure, and sustain themselves. The current live-fire-centric model of unit training requires a great deal of crew, squad, and platoon gunnery proficiency.¹¹ This has yielded positive results for units at NTC. Live fire alone, however, will not ingrain the skills of automatic reporting, security, and sustainment without ruthless enforcement during training. Leaders should

not assume that their small-unit leaders know how to perform these tasks to standard. They may need to start with a white board or a Micro-Armor (miniature model) explanation followed by a walk-through.

A review of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and reports may also prove necessary to ensure standardization across the BCT. Finally, training that requires small units to establish security, report, and sustain themselves for long durations under combat conditions—repeatedly—best builds the muscle memory required to perform these tasks in combat or at NTC. Each repetition should be executed and evaluated under increasingly more difficult conditions (day, night, chemical attack, degraded communication, drone observation, etc.) and for longer duration. Units must be evaluated on these tasks using training and evaluation outlines, be given an after action review, and be required to do it again. This kind of training can be done at a gunnery or at low cost in local training areas.¹²

Mission Command Requires Discipline and Accountability

Leaders routinely misunderstand the concept of mission command regarding planning and execution of

operations at NTC. There is often a sense that orders, timing, requirements, reports, and battle-rhythm events are in some ways negotiable if they interfere with or do not conform to lower-unit actions or expectations. Missed suspenses and tardy reporting, unperformed requirements, and a lack of communication add to the general collapse as the BCT tries to understand why subordinate units have not accomplished their assigned missions. A reluctance persists to enforce these requirements either through direct or general admonishment. This disinclination to require compliance is frequently coupled with planning mistakenly deliberate in its lack of details, which the staff hopes will enable commanders to exercise initiative. These conceptual plans usually lack adequate graphic control measures, timing, tasks, and triggers, subsequently hindering the BCT's ability to control the fight or

An opposing force soldier from Killer Troop, 2nd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, fires a simulated tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided missile from atop a visually modified vehicle at an M1A1 Abrams main battle tank from 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, 3 August 2016 at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California. (Photo by Pvt. Austin Anyzeski, U.S. Army)



combine arms effectively. These two factors—a lack of adherence to the plan and conceptual planning—often lead to problems of land management, coordination, synchronization, sustainment, and combining arms, as each unit fights its own war according to its perceived needs. Doing so does not result in a BCT fight that restores offensive action. Instead, it often leads to defeat in detail and fratricide.

Controlling the BCT fight also necessitates detailed planning of actions, triggers, and timing. This staff work constitutes the science of combat and cannot be neglected if the BCT expects to combine arms effectively.¹⁴ NTC requires BCTs to conduct the meticulous work necessary to use indirect fire, attack aviation, CAS, special munitions, and other assets in the way they would have to in combat. Applying assets for a BCT fight

“These two factors—a lack of adherence to the plan and conceptual planning—often lead to problems of land management, coordination, synchronization, sustainment, and combining arms, as each unit fights its own war according to its perceived needs.”

Decisive action requires a revitalization of command and control as the foundational pillars of mission command.¹³ Units and leaders must understand that fighting necessitates adherence to the plan, tasks, timing, and reporting. Many problems start with a lack of communication that extends for hours and even days without resolution. Leaders must realize that the subordinate units must gain and maintain communication with their higher headquarters. They then must report according to the battle rhythm; primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency (PACE) communications plan; and SOP accurately and on time. There can be no exceptions or excuses for not doing so. Leaders must also understand that every subordinate action happens in time and space in conjunction and coordination with other units, assets, and activities. This makes actions such as making a designated start point and a line of departure times, as well as the requirements to establish support by fire (SBF) positions, target prosecution, and logistics release points nonnegotiable.

We are no longer in a situation in which subordinate leaders can decide that “the conditions are not set” or that it really does not matter if units operate independently from one another, as in a counterinsurgency fight where units were battlespace owners. This starts with BCTs adhering to division requirements and ends with soldiers executing their given tasks on time and on target. Noncompliance under a misconceived notion of mission command risks mission failure.

requires detailed graphic control measures and synchronization of actions in time and space. Therefore, leaders must adhere to the plan if the conditions that the BCT sets remain in effect in order to accomplish their given tasks as part of the overall fight. If an internal condition prevents battalion adherence to the plan, it is a subordinate commander’s responsibility to report and have a discussion early enough for the BCT and the staff to mitigate risks and modify the plan.

Although control limits a leader’s scope of action in a theoretical sense, it actually provides the framework for exercise of initiative because it tells a commander what to do where and when, not how to do it.¹⁵ Ample room remains for a commander to exercise initiative and creativity in task organization, sequence, application of internal assets, etc. Good graphic control measures and the applied science of control also lend clarity to the situation, delineate boundaries, and allow for the effective use of combined arms. Control does not negate the art of command.¹⁶ Adhering to the plan, understanding the intent, and being accountable to the BCT reflect the tenants of mission command. It is the *discipline* in disciplined initiative.¹⁷

The commander’s intent is also a powerful guide for action, especially when the plan breaks down due to the friction inherent in any fight. The key tasks in the intent statement not only have to be accomplished but also have to be done in time and space to be effective. Units will have to fight through the enemy and friction to

accomplish these tasks that set the conditions for victory. None of these considerations preclude a commander or subordinate leader from assessing the situation, applying the commander's intent, and then acting to exploit an opportunity that not only achieves the intent but also places the unit in a position of advantage vis-à-vis the enemy. For example, a battalion or company tasked to establish an SBF position could surprise the enemy and continue to maneuver around or behind a position to achieve a more decisive effect than a straightforward SBF. Doing so achieves the required result while also exploiting an opportunity inherent in mission-type orders. Conversely, the commander and staff retain responsibility to communicate intent clearly and to design straightforward, yet flexible plans, which allow for command, control, the exercise of initiative, and the assumption of risk.

The concepts of command, control, discipline, and accountability as they relate to mission command need to be explained and trained at home station in order to prevent misunderstanding and confusion for leaders throughout the formation. Taking the time to discuss the requirements of decisive action as they relate to mission command through conversation and reading can go a long way to building a shared approach to command and control prior to the rotation. Additionally, trainers should design scenarios that require leaders to exercise initiative and assume risk to meet their stated objectives in time and space according to the plan and the commander's intent. This can be done through tactical decision games, training exercises without troops, and simulations.

Training leaders to think and adapt is the commander's responsibility and will achieve the shared understanding and mutual trust required of mission command. Discipline and accountability, however, must be ruthlessly enforced in garrison, training, at NTC, and in combat. Leaders should attempt to find ways to match battle-rhythm events and reporting formats and requirements in garrison to those that they will use in combat. There can be no excuses for late or inaccurate reports. A climate of accountability will help to dissipate the fog of war quickly and allow the BCT to act in concert to achieve its mission.

Shared Understanding Is a Battle Drill

Units and leaders struggle to achieve shared understanding after the BCT makes and sustains contact. The

friction of the fight and breakdown of reporting result in a dearth of critical information required for the commander to visualize the fight. In this state, commanders attempt to visualize based on the limited information they have, but they are typically forced to rely on their experience, intuition, and sense of the problem.

That critical commander's visualization can be hindered by a fog of war that prevents units, staffs, and command posts from getting the information that allows the commander to understand the situation before visualizing and prescribing a proper course of action.¹⁸ As emphasized above, reporting and enforcement of the battle rhythm, SOPs, and procedures help generate understanding. Staffs are the primary agents for taking this information and generating the common operating picture (COP) that helps everyone in the BCT understand the situation. The COP is often thought of as a thing, as in "what is the COP?"¹⁹ That question really concerns how the COP is transmitted and received, whether through digital or analog means. These are the media or means of transmission that make the COP common. The inputs, overlays, reports, and updates make the COP an operating picture. To be useful, the COP, therefore, has to be complete (accounting for all applicable warfighting functions [Wffs], overlays, and control measures); it has to be duplicated using analog, digital, or combined techniques; it has to be distributed; it has to be updated with timely and accurate inputs; and it has to be used by subordinate units.²⁰

Staff running estimates (SREs) that accurately reflect the current state of the BCT across Wffs form the basis for building a COP that allows for shared understanding. Too often, SREs remain inaccurate because the reporting required to maintain them is either erroneous or absent. Consequently, the staff's attempt to update the commander or inform plans is ineffective at best and leads to poor decisions at worst. To be effective, SREs must be standardized across Wffs and in subordinate units. The format, content, display, and ability to be communicated needs to be the same in the battalion and the BCT TOCs.

Doing so enables staffs to communicate quickly and efficiently. It also lends clarity to not only what needs to be reported when but also how it needs to be reported. It is best to have both a digital and analog version of the SRE to allow for continued use without power or during jumps. Although each Wff section will have different data they have to collect to inform the COP,

SREs can and should be standardized to allow for clarity and brevity when conveying information. Each WfF must have a set of tools: maps, graphics, references, products, and procedures to help with the analysis inherent in a good SRE process. A standardized SRE can also be used as the single format for staff updates, “two-minute drills,” commander’s or battle update briefs, and shift changes. They can be used face-to-face, over the radio, or via digital means.

Each WfF should have its own PACE that allows for reporting, collaboration, and coordination with subordinate and higher units. Liaison officers (LNOs) to the BCT should have their own SREs that inform current operations and plans. An internal WfF PACE and LNOs who can inform the BCT keep unneeded traffic off the command net, speed reporting, and reduce friction by giving WfF leads the means to reach up and across the formation for needed information. This is why communicating over the tactical internet is so important in a decisive action fight. Without it, WfFs rely on push-to-talk (radio) and type-to-send (lower tactical internet) systems and channels that are time-consuming and typically reserved for commanders.

With digital connectivity, WfFs and LNOs can use chat, SharePoint graphic sharing, and most importantly, phones to coordinate. It also connects the systems that allow for the application of combined arms and allows BCT-level WfFs to pull information from and coordinate the use of assets with division.

Focusing on accurate SREs standardized across the BCT and WfFs, can help rapidly rebuild situational understanding after first contact. Doing so also allows staff officers to move from making educated guesses to providing analysis and recommendations that allow the commander and subordinate units to visualize the fight and direct the actions necessary to restore offensive action.

Like the other aspects of the BCT fight, standard SREs and the tools that accompany them have to be developed and used at home station to be effective at NTC. Staffs, especially WfF CUOPs representatives, must be trained and practiced on their use and analysis before combat. Introducing new processes to untrained personnel during RSOI or the rotation rarely works. The staff, like platoons and companies, must have multiple repetitions under progressively more rigorous conditions to be successful in generating shared understanding during the fight.

Planning While Fighting

One of the greatest drivers of friction after first contact is the BCT’s staff struggle, and often failure, to continue to plan and prepare for the next mission while fighting the current one. It is common to see multiple staff primaries, the XO, operations officer (S3), and commander around a map desperately trying to understand the situation and forge a way forward after the first twenty-four hours. These sessions, while typically long in time, are short on answers and solutions. The chaos, collapse, and fog of war often continue despite the staff’s willingness to forgo almost every other activity while trying to find a way to restore order and action.

In the absence of order, BCT commanders will often try to impose it by establishing radio communication with battalion commanders and directing BCT actions through these discussions. In either case, the BCT falls prey to a cycle of reaction followed by enemy counteraction, which requires another reaction. Planning for the division-directed BCT mission and transitions regularly breaks down or becomes neglected as the BCT, battalions, and companies stumble into and out of fights that inflict additional losses and further slow tempo. A lack of reporting, action, and inaccurate data from incomplete SREs leave planners, who are often precommand maneuver captains, without the means to effectively plan.

Staff primaries habitually find themselves consumed with immediate problems to the detriment of their vital contribution to planning. The result can be a plan developed in a vacuum, not quality controlled by field-grade officers, issued too late, and without the detail necessary to fight the BCT fight. As a result, rehearsals usually degenerate into war games as commanders and staff primaries struggle to rectify an incomplete and conceptual plan with the realities on the ground.

Preventing the situation described above requires the structure and discipline to continue to plan for directed operations while fighting the current fight. Primary staff officers must first understand the difference between the military decision-making process (MDMP) and the rapid decision-making and synchronization process (RDSP).

MDMP primarily orients the BCT on the division-directed missions that must be executed in time, space, and effect in coordination with other BCTs and division actions.²¹ It also produces a plan that allows

the BCT to transition from one phase to another to maintain momentum. It constitutes a quasi-scientific process that gives the commander the staff's best estimate of the situation and the means to resolve tactical problems. Doing so requires the expertise resident at the field-grade level. Majors, primary staff officers, and noncommissioned officers have the responsibility to apply the science necessary to transform concepts

XO, or primary staff officers. In reality, the commander and XO may have to withhold some authorities at their levels to ensure that assets are applied according to the rule of law and the overall intent. These caveats should be few to allow for BCT-wide freedom of action.

To be effective, staff articulation, field-grade officer participation, and CUOPs responsibility for RDSP must be practiced and enforced in garrison and during

“One of the greatest drivers of friction after first contact is the brigade combat team's staff struggle, and often failure, to continue to plan and prepare for the next mission while fighting the current one.”

into a detailed plan that can be rehearsed and executed. Therefore, staff primaries must be present and an integral part of MDMP throughout. The BCT XO enforces this requirement.

Additionally, BCTs cannot commit planners to developing solutions for the immediate fight if the BCT expects to continue to plan. Accurate SREs enable the planners to base the steps, processes, and products on the realities on the ground versus ones that are not feasible because they fail to take the true situation into account. BCT commanders must also be disciplined enough to take only those officers who are absolutely necessary with him in the mobile command group to allow for continuous planning. This may mean leaving not only the intelligence and fire support officers but also the S3 at the TOC to allow for effective input into and supervision of the MDMP.

If the MDMP constitutes the means for action, the RDSP fulfills the requirement for reaction to enemy activity.²² The chief of operations (CHOPs) and those personnel that man the CUOPs floor must be empowered to understand, coordinate, and act to resolve the current situation or threat without disrupting the planning or preparation for the next fight. Doing so requires timely and accurate reporting, SREs that feed the COP, and the means to direct action based on an established PACE plan by WfFs. It also requires staff leads to train, inform, and empower their representatives on the CUOPs floor.

Ideally, enemy actions or contingencies should be dealt with without involving the BCT commander, the

training events. Iterative command-post exercises that place BCT staffs in a situation where they must plan division-directed tasks while resolving immediate threats will build the systems, processes, and skills necessary to maintain doing so at the NTC and in combat. Articulating the authorities necessary to fight the BCT fight and training the CHOPs and his or her staff to execute RDSP immediate action without relying on the commander, S3, and XO will help the BCT remain focused on planning while dealing with contingencies and the friction of first contact.

BCT Enablers Have to Be Planned to Be Used and Not Everyone Can Get Them

A modern U.S. Army BCT deploys to the NTC or combat with a set of enablers and capabilities that allows it to fight a combined arms battle across a wide frontage against a similarly capable enemy. The transformation of brigades into BCTs in the twenty-first century has given commanders the ability and staff the responsibility to coordinate and apply assets that previously resided at the division level. Frustratingly, BCTs typically struggle to apply this vast and powerful array of combat capabilities to sustained effect after first contact. All of the various factors described above contribute to this often maddening fact. The main cause of the failure to apply assets effectively lies in how they are routinely used after the BCT outruns the plan. CAS, attack aviation, intelligence collection

platforms, and electronic warfare assets are the weapons of first resort in an attempt resolve the friction and the fog of war. In the absence of an effective reconnaissance or security fight, BCTs will consistently commit their unmanned aerial sensor platforms without effective suppression of enemy air defense or priority intelligence requirements that focus collection and determine the enemy's course of action.

CAS and attack aviation are often committed in the same way in the hope that doing so will cause enough attrition to allow for the restoration of offensive action. Battalions will often demand that the BCT "enable" their attempts to attack or restart their reconnaissance with the same set of assets controlled at the battalion level. These disjointed commitments of valuable assets are usually more than mildly dissatisfying as they not only fail to achieve their intended effect but also routinely result in the costly loss of critical systems and capabilities for the division-directed fight.

The hard truth is that these awesome capabilities can only be utilized efficiently if the BCT staff does the detailed planning necessary to employ them in time and space for a BCT-level effect. Piecemealing or task-organizing assets might result in local successes, but these are fleeting because the advantage they garner lasts minutes to hours at the most if these efforts are not followed by offensive ground maneuver. Additionally, the unplanned application of BCT-level enablers inevitably results in a restricted fires environment as these platforms violate gun target lines and make air and ground difficult to manage. This often results in lost systems, and tragically, fratricide. Finally, the unplanned commitment of BCT assets usually means that they are absent when the BCT must execute its division-directed missions.

Detailed planning remains the best means for the BCT to shape the deep fight, enable the close fight, and combine arms at the decisive point. Using the techniques described above will help staffs understand the situation and provide the means to continue to plan while fighting. The key is an unwavering focus on the decisive point where the BCT must shape for, and enable, the main effort of the decisive operation to accomplish the BCT's mission. All other considerations are secondary. This means that battalion commanders must understand they may want fires, attack aviation, CAS, and other enablers but should not count on them if they are not the main effort.

This is a difficult pill to swallow, especially for leaders habituated to the counterinsurgency fight when these assets were readily available and could be applied by battalions, companies, and platoons with devastating results because of overmatch. This simply cannot happen in a decisive action fight where the targets outnumber the systems available to engage them, and the enemy can find, target, and destroy these assets with relative ease. Husbanding these resources, planning for their application, and delivering the might of a U.S. BCT at the decisive point must be the staff's goal.

The conversation that informs leaders from platoon to BCT levels of the realities of the enabler fight in decisive action has to begin at home station. Doing so establishes expectations and trains the staff to stay focused on the decisive point. It also lets small-unit leaders know that they will have to rely on their own assets—scouts, Raven unmanned aerial vehicles, mortars, and maneuver forces—to resolve their tactical problems if they are not the main effort. Too often, battalions ask for BCT assets when they have not fully committed their own.

Staffs must practice the development and management of the unit airspace plan, manage crew availability, and deconflict fire support coordination measures with attack aviation and CAS at training events. Intelligence officers, fire support officers, and supporting staffs must be able to develop high-value target lists, attack guidance, priority intelligence requirements, and attrition criteria to effectively fight the BCT fight. Leader professional development programs, command-post exercises, and reduced-force fire coordination exercises that require detailed planning are excellent means to achieve a level of proficiency and understanding before deploying to NTC or combat.

Will and Action Resolve Friction and Create Opportunities

Finally, and most critically, the commander must exercise iron will to lead his or her formation through the collapse. Doing so necessitates making decisions in the face of uncertainty and having the moral courage to see them through. Delaying a decision in the hope of perfect situational understanding only exacerbates the state of collapse. It may also require some uncomfortably direct, but necessary, conversations between the commander, the staff, and subordinate commanders. It might necessitate specific or general admonishment when these leaders

and units fail to adhere to the standards of reporting, compliance, planning, and action required to fight through friction. It could require the commander to order battalions to continue to attack or resume offensive action despite losses and a lack of enablers. A BCT commander may need to move to a unit that has repeatedly failed to meet its objectives to ensure that it succeeds. None of these potentially unpleasant conversations need be personal, but they will be necessary and better than inertia and defeat.

In any case, restoring offensive action will be born of will, driven by intellect, and informed by tough repetitive training. As Hans von Seeckt aptly stated, The essential thing is action. Action has three stages: the decision born of thought, the order or preparation for execution, and the execution itself. All three stages are governed by the will. The will is rooted in

character, and for the man of action character is of more critical importance than intellect. Intellect without will is worthless, will without intellect is dangerous.²³

This is why commanders are placed in charge of units and given the awesome and burdensome responsibility to lead them. It is one only a commander can shoulder. But our soldiers and victory depend on it.

After several minutes of contemplation, a deep calm came over the BCT commander as he realized that the situation that he and the BCT faced was the very one they had trained to fight through. With renewed vigor, he strode back into the TOC and told his expectant staff, "We are trained for this. XO, get the guidons ready for a battle update in an hour. S3, assemble the WfF leads and the planners; I want to get an update and issue guidance before we start. We are about to start taking the fight to the enemy." ■

Author's note: The author would like to thank the leaders and soldiers of the brigade combat teams who trained at the National Training Center from August to June 2018–2019 for their dedication, professionalism, and desire to learn valuable lessons in the desert. He would also like to thank the professionals of the National Training Center, the Operations Group, and, especially, the brigade trainers (Bronco Group) for their comments, corrections, expertise, and commitment to training. The descriptions, lessons, and suggestions contained in this article do not reflect a particular unit and are the observations of the author alone. They do not represent official trends nor are its prescriptions those of the National Training Center or Operations Group.

Notes

1. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (2003), s.v. "collapse." The term collapse is used throughout this article to describe the unexpected and widespread results of the friction the brigade combat team (BCT) experiences after first contact. According to Merriam-Webster, to collapse is "to suddenly lose force, significance, and effectiveness," which best describes what happens to a BCT. The use of the term is not meant to imply that this takes place because of neglect or poor planning but to suggest that the consequences of friction are so sudden and its scope so unexpected that responding to it effectively is extremely difficult.

2. Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-90.1, *Armor and Mechanized Infantry Company Team* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], January 2016), 2-13. The eight forms of contact are direct; indirect; nonhostile; obstacles; chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear; aerial; visual; and electronic warfare.

3. Communications difficulties typically include issues with retransmission system positioning and functionality, establishment of Army Battle Command Systems using upper tactical internet, and the consistent ability to communicate using Blue Force Tracker or the Joint Capabilities Release systems. Many other issues are the result of incomplete precombat checks and inspections, a lack of critical equipment or not-mission-capable systems that

are unreported, or a lack of proper training and supervision. The accumulation of these soldier-level tasks lead to BCT-wide friction.

4. Robert L. Maginnis, "Battle Stress: Are We Prepared?," *Armor* 93, no. 6 (November–December 1984): 35–40; Dave Grossman and Loren Christensen, *On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Conflict in War* (Millstadt, IL: Warrior Science Publications, 2008).

5. There are countless historical examples and references that can inform personal professional reading and leader development in helping understand the conditions, toll, and consequences of preparation for combat and the first fight. Some examples include Victor Davis Hanson, *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989); John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London: Penguin Books, 1979); S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947); T. R. Ferhrenbach, *This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness* (New York: Macmillan, 1963).

For engaging descriptions of training at the National Training Center (NTC), see Daniel P. Bolger, *Dragons at War: 2-34th Infantry in the Mojave* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1986); James R. McDonough, *The Defense of Hill 781: An Allegory of Modern Mechanized Combat* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988); Anne W. Chapman, *The Origins and Developments of the National Training*

Center, 1976-1984 (Fort Monroe, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command [TRADOC], 1992), 85-90, 106-9; Anne W. Chapman, *The National Training Center Matures, 1985-1993* (Fort Monroe, VA: TRADOC, 1997), 107-36, 281-305.

For fictional accounts of mechanized combat, see Harold Coyle, *Team Yankee: A Novel of World War III* (Philadelphia: Case-mate, 2016); Ralph Peter, *Red Army: A Novel of Tomorrow's War* (New York: Pocket Books, 1989).

6. Carl von Clausewitz, "Friction in War," in *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 65-68, 88. Clausewitz's explanation of friction is undoubtedly amongst his greatest contribution to the theory of war since, in his words, "friction is the only concept that more or less corresponds to the factors that distinguish real war from war on paper." His equally famous dictum that "everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult" elucidates the straightforward, but profound, truth that governs and limits every action in combat. As he further explains, "We should bear in mind that none of its [the unit's] components is of one piece: each part is composed of individuals, every one of whom retains his potential friction." The entire chapter seven is required reading and gives context to the friction, difficulties, and state of collapse that units struggle with at the NTC; Clausewitz, "Third Property: Uncertainty of All Information," in Howard and Paret, *On War*, 88-89. Although Clausewitz does not specifically use the term "fog of war," his description of the components of friction: physical exertion, intelligence (or lack thereof), and danger combined with the complex nature of moving, maneuvering, and leading a military organization filled with individuals suggest that all actions in war take place under a fog or haze of uncertainty. For a contrary interpretation of Clausewitz's notion of "fog and friction," see Eugenia C. Kiesling, "On War: Without the Fog," *Military Review* 81, no. 5 (September-October 2001): 85-87.

7. Brig. Gen. Christopher R. Norrie, then commander, Operations Group, author's personal notes from Senior Trainer In-Brief, July 2018.

8. For resources for using and developing tactical decision games (TDGs), see John F. Schmidt, *Mastering Tactics: A Tactical Decision Game Workbook* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Association, 1994); see also "Tactical Decision Games: Your Index for TDGs," The Company Leader, accessed 12 September 2019, <http://companyleader.themilitaryleader.com/tdg>. TDGs are an easy and cost-effective way for battalion and brigade combat team commanders to not only train subordinate leaders but also to see how they think about tactical problems. Giving an officer or a noncommissioned officer a TDG to solve during staff duty or professional development sessions is a relatively simple way to build tactical competence, provide repetitions, and convey intent through feedback.

9. ATP 3-20.15, *Tank Platoon* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 2012), 6-1-6-5, 6-12-6-15.

10. *Ibid.*, 9-1-9-14.

11. See *Leader's Guide to Objective Assessment of Training Proficiency* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 29 September 2017), accessed 12 September 2019, [\(https://atn.army.mil/unit-training-management\(utm\)/standards-for-training-proficiency-\(stp\)\)](https://atn.army.mil/unit-training-management(utm)/standards-for-training-proficiency-(stp)) (CAC required).

12. For discussions of small-unit training, see Arthur Collins, *Common Sense Training: A Working Philosophy for Leaders* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1978); Dandridge A. Malone, *Small Unit Leadership: A Common Sense Approach* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983); Training Circular 25-10, *A Leader's Guide to Lane Training* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996) [obsolete]; James B. Hickey, *Closing with the Enemy: Company Team Maneuver* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Center for Army Lessons Learned, March 1998); Field Manual 7-0, *Train to Win in a Complex World* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2016).

For insights from Operations Group on preparing for an NTC rotation, see Alan R. Cocks, "Objective NTC: Some Ideas for Leaders on How to Get There From Here," *Armor* 95, no. 4 (July-August 1986): 11-19; Larry E. Word, *Observations from Three Years at the NTC* (Monterey, CA: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 1987), accessed 13 September 2019, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a179386.pdf>; Christopher R. Norrie, Thomas E. Lamb, and Michael J. Culler, "Ready Now-Our Number One Priority," *Military Review* 98, no. 5 (September-October 2018): 61-69.

13. Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012 [obsolete]), 2-17, superseded by Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, July 2019.

14. *Ibid.*, 2-12-2-17.

15. ADRP 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012 [obsolete]), 4-1-4-2, superseded by ADP 5-0, *The Operations Process*, July 2019.

16. ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 2-5-2-17.

17. *Ibid.*, 1-1-1-4.

18. ADRP 5-0, *The Operations Process*, 1-3-1-11.

19. ATP 6-0.5, *Command Post Organization and Operation* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2017), 3-5, 3-10-3-12, C-7-C-8.

20. ADP 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, July 2019), 5-2-5-7. The six warfighting functions are command and control, movement and maneuver, intelligence, fires, sustainment, and protection.

21. ADRP 5-0, *The Operations Process*, 2-11-2-13.

22. *Ibid.*, 4-6-4-9.

23. Hans Von Seeckt, *Thoughts of a Soldier* (London: E. Benn, 1930).



Troopers assigned to 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, provide security 14 April 2019 during Operation Lightning Strike 2019 at Pōhakuloa Training Area, Island of Hawaii, Hawaii. (Photo by Pvt. Ezra Camarena, U.S. Army)

Lightning Strike

Brig. Gen. Joel B. (J. B.) Vowell, U.S. Army

Maj. Benjamin Scott, U.S. Army

Maj. Edward Guelfi, U.S. Army

The importance of certifying combined-arms formations in mission essential tasks under live-fire conditions is enduring. Virtual and constructive training display shortcomings when replicating terrain, environments, and conditions faced by soldiers. With the advent of multi-domain operations

(MDO), the certification of MDO tenets under live-fire conditions is essential.¹ In the twenty-first century, combined-arms integration is still foundational to the success of Army units. Current and future battlefields will require the employment of effects from multiple domains, layered upon combined-arms integration,

to achieve convergence. Practicing convergence in live conditions augmented with virtual and constructive elements will enable training of large formations and staffs; such practice is required to achieve the highest possible proficiency in warfighting.

In April 2019, the 25th Infantry Division (25th ID) deployed to the Pōhakuloa Training Area on Hawaii's Big Island to do just this. Operation Lightning Strike 2019 was designed to take lessons from the 25th ID's recent Warfighter Exercise (WFX) 19-01 and practice critical events of the WFX under integrated virtual and live-fire conditions within the MDO construct. While the WFX was successful

in meeting training objectives and outcomes while producing a more proficient division staff, all of the training was conducted in the virtual environment with limited constructive portions incorporated

Brig. Gen. Joel (J. B.)

Vowell, U.S. Army, is the deputy J-5, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. He received his commission from the University of Alabama in 1991 and is a career infantry officer. He has been stationed in Europe, the Pacific, and many posts across the United States. His last assignment was as the 25th Infantry Division deputy commanding general-operations on Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Vowell has been on three combat tours in Afghanistan and one in Iraq, including both surge campaigns. He commanded the 3rd Brigade Combat Team (Rakkasans) of the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and Afghanistan. Vowell was a War College Fellow at Stanford University and was the Army chief of staff's Senior Fellow to the Brookings Institution.

Maj. Benjamin Scott, U.S. Army, serves as operations officer for the 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, after completing utilization as a future operations planner for the 25th Infantry Division on Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Scott is an infantry officer and received his commission from the University of Tennessee. He holds an MA in military operations from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. His operational assignments include multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan and a humanitarian assistance mission to Liberia.

to augment decision-making processes. The decision to practice the WFX scenario under live-fire conditions was predicated on one simple question: Was the division training in the same way it would fight?

Lightning Strike 2019

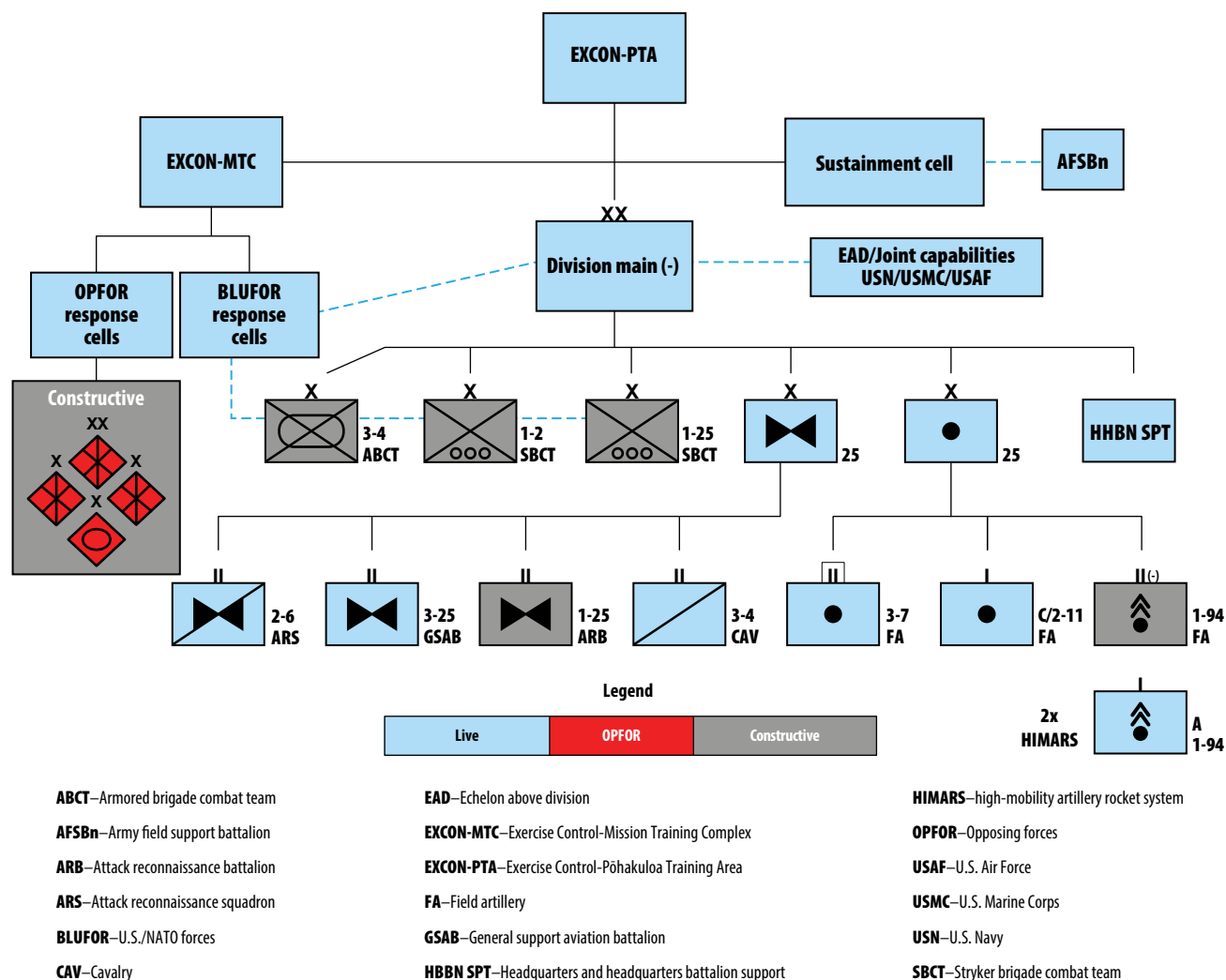
The 25th ID deployed to the Pōhakuloa Training Area in the spring of 2019 to test and validate emerging Army doctrine under live-fire conditions. The division sought to determine whether the way it fought in WFX 19-01 could survive the realities and friction of a live environment. The 25th ID planned, resourced, and executed Operation Lightning Strike using *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028* concept as the keystone of exercise design. Planning and execution occurred

under the auspices of U.S. Army Pacific and in close coordination with joint, interagency, and multinational partners. Operating as part of a joint force, the 25th ID would (1) validate the division's ability to "*penetrate and disintegrate* enemy antiaccess and area denial systems; (2) *exploit* the resulting freedom of maneuver to defeat enemy systems, formations, and objectives and to achieve our own strategic objectives; and (3) consolidate gains to force a *return to competition* on terms more favorable to the United States, its allies, and partners."²

Following the completion of the division's WFX, the 25th ID commander, Maj. Gen. Ron Clark, directed the division and enabled brigade staffs to plan, resource,

Maj. Edward Guelfi,

U.S. Army, is the executive officer for the 2nd Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Regiment, after recently finishing his time as the division fire support officer for the 25th Infantry Division on Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Guelfi was commissioned as a field artillery officer in 2007, and he has served as battalion commander, observer-controller/trainer at the Joint Readiness Training Center, aide-de-camp, and most recently as a special assistant to the chief of staff of the Army in the Pentagon. He holds a BA in political science and an MA in security studies from the Marine Corps University Command and Staff College. His operational assignments include multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.



(Figure by Maj. Benjamin Scott and Maj. Matt DeSablo, 25th Infantry Division G35, U.S. Army)

Figure 1. Exercise Design Task-Organization

and train concepts, processes, and techniques employed in the WFX under live-fire conditions enabled by a synthetic live, virtual, and constructive training environment. The commander's intent for Lightning Strike was to retrain and maintain the proficiency of the division staff while also validating how the division fought during WFX 19-01. The division adapted its Lightning Strike combined-arms live-fire (CALFEX) at the Pōhakuloa Training Area to incorporate participation of the division main command post, with focus on its Joint Air-Ground Integration Center (JAGIC), employing virtual and constructive systems and formations to drive training. The 25th Division Artillery

(25th DIVARTY); 25th Combat Aviation Brigade (25th CAB); 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment (3-4 CAV); and Battery A (minus), 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery Regiment participated as live-fire units.

The 25th ID conducted WFX 19-01 in October 2018. During this exercise, the division fought purely in the simulated environment while applying concepts, processes, and techniques intended to best meet mission requirements. Significant among these were (see figure 1)

- the division's execution of deliberate and dynamic targeting across all domains;
- shaping in the division's deep-fight using all available resources;

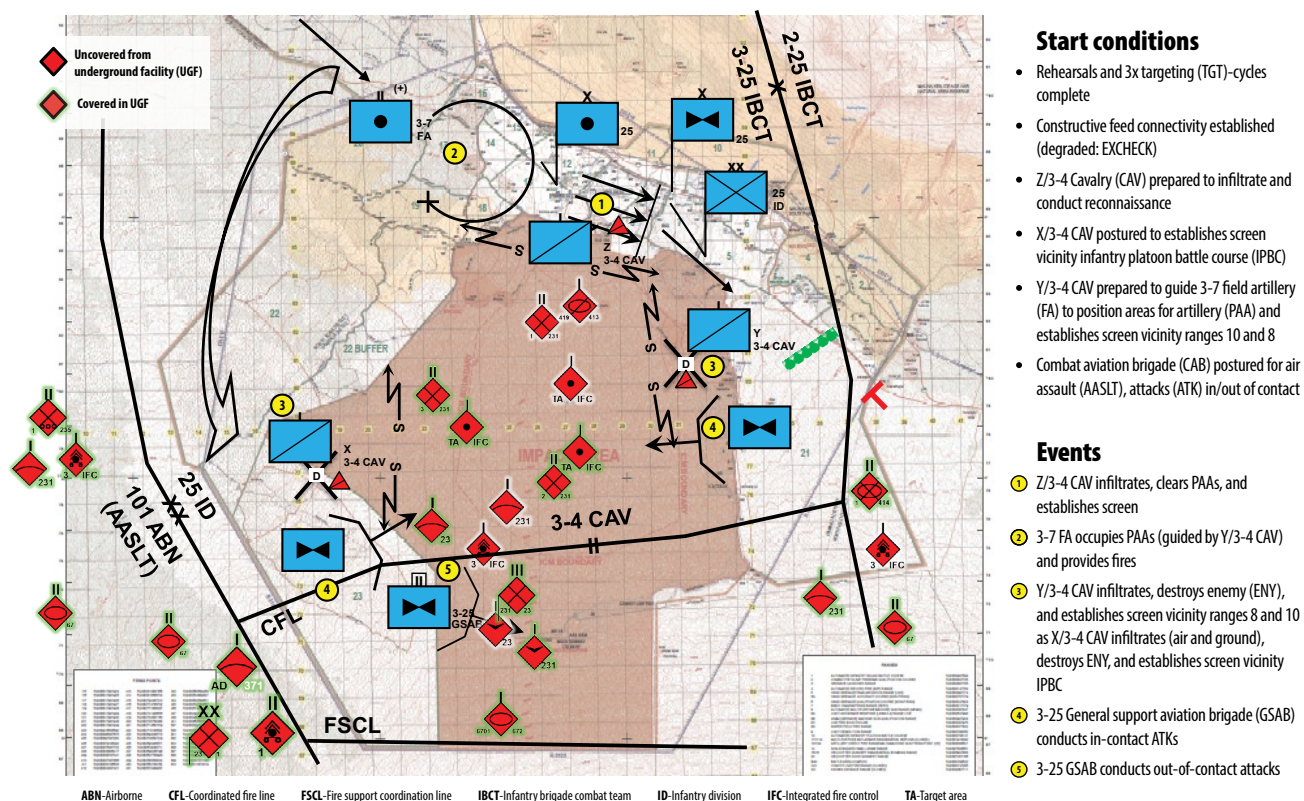


Figure 2. Lightning Strike 2019 Combined-Arms Live-Fire Concept

- ◆ shaping in compressed time and space in the division's close fight;
- ◆ employment of the 25th DIVARTY as the division force field artillery headquarters;
- ◆ employment of the 25th CAB as the mission command element for the division reconnaissance task force; and
- ◆ employment of joint, multi-domain fires processed through Joint Automated Deep Operations Coordination Software (JADOCS) and the Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System (AFATDS).

Exercise Design

Exercise design for Lightning Strike 2019 centered on three areas: CALFEX, the simulated environment, and the wider scenario required to stimulate deliberate targeting. By understanding training objectives and forces available, the exercise planners generated CALFEX

- options feasible at the Pōhakuloa Training Area. With formations and terrain available, the CALFEX consisted of the following (see figure 2):

- The division main command post provided mission command.
- 3-4 CAV served as the ground component of the division reconnaissance task force. In this role, the squadron conducted air assaults and ground maneuvers to establish a screen after clearing position areas for artillery.
- 25th CAB served as the mission command element for the division reconnaissance task force, supported air assaults, and conducted attacks against enemy in and out of contact with friendly forces.
- 25th DIVARTY served as the division's force field artillery headquarters and provided counterfire, close fires, suppression of enemy air defense, and destructive fires.

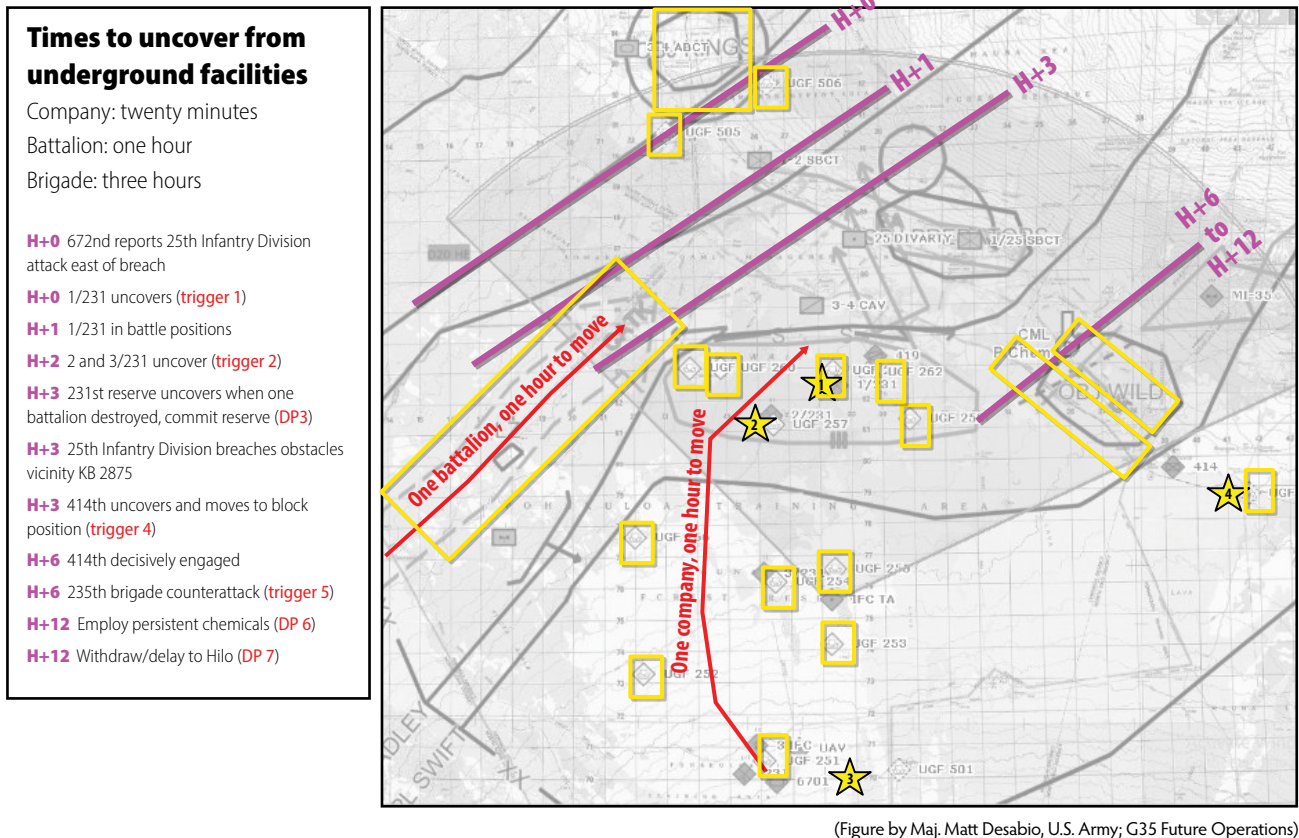


Figure 3. Enemy Courses of Action for the Combined-Arms Live-Fire Depicted on an Event Template

- Exercise control–Pōhakuloa Training Area conducted range support and safety operations and served as the single point of contact with range control.
- Five iterations of CALFEX were executed with three occurring during daylight and two at night. Each iteration occurred for approximately four and a half hours over three days. Iterations were independent, and the scenario was reset after each iteration.

The division would assault southeast from along the main avenue of approach against an enemy brigade consisting of mechanized, light, and motorized forces defended in the enemy's battle zone for the live-fire and simulated exercises. These enemy forces represented a near-peer threat and possessed substantial air-defense and long-range artillery while making maximum use of terrain. The enemy also employed underground facilities to prevent effective targeting

and shaping by U.S. forces. The challenge would be to induce the enemy to uncover these facilities with both sensors and delivery assets prepared to detect and destroy enemy forces in compressed time and space.

After completing the CALFEX maneuver scheme, the focus shifted to creating the simulated environment necessary to stimulate CALFEX, JAGIC, and command posts. Within the simulation, planners developed an enemy scheme of maneuver that overlaid locations of physical targets on the ranges and in the impact area at Pōhakuloa Training Area. The simulated enemy provided the stimuli necessary to drive dynamic targeting and CALFEX when paired with simulated fires assets; maneuver forces; intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance platforms; and underground facilities. The simulation, tied to targets on the ground, provided enemy stimuli for collection that drove joint fires, maneuver, and decision-making (see

Time	ATO	ROLL 0001Z	1400	JB	1400	JC	1400	JD	1400	JE	1400	JF	1400	JG	
	D-DAY	HST (W)	10	11 APR	12 APR	13 APR	14 APR	15 APR	16 APR						
	SET		SET 2		SET 3		SET 4				SET 5				
ILLUM.															
WEATHER															
	ENEMY														
Higher	I CORPS		PHASE III												
Adjacent	 														
Division															
Subordinate BDEs															
			PP: SPT 3-4 LOC: CP11 PP: SPT 1/25 LOC: OBJ KINGS PP: SPT 1/25 LOC: OBJ PREDATORS PP: SPT LEAD BCT LOC: OBJ WILD												
			OOCA EA4 (SE KINGS), SPT BREACH OOCA PRED, WILD AASLT C/3-4, A/3-4 - OOCA EA5 BAX/10, ICA EA6 IPBC												
			1-94 FA: TAA PRIDE 3-7 FA: PL MURRAY Q-53: PL MURRAY 1-94 FA: PL COLLINS 3-7 FA: PL COLLINS Q-53: PL MURRAY 1-94 FA: PL COLLINS 3-7 FA: PL COLLINS Q-53: PL COLLINS 1-94: OBJ PREDATORS 3-7 FA: IVO OBJ WILD Q-53: PL MULLINS 1-94: PL MADDOX 3-7 FA: PL CARTER Q-53: PL BRADLEY												
Collection	DETECT	Focus	672nd CATK		672d AR BDE, ENY obstacle belt 235th CATK, Threats to 3-4 AASLT		23rd Div CATK (235th or 414th), MPAA IFC, 231st MECH BDE		23ID Reserve Commitment		414th retrograde 23rd DAG remnants		ENY Dispo IVO HURRICANES		
		Support	JSTARS, NTM		JSTARS, Rivet Joint, NTM		JSTARS, Rivet Joint, NTM		JSTARS (GMTI)		GMTI, NTM		NTM, GEOINT		
		Organic	Puma-GE/Shadow		Puma-GE/Shadow		Puma-GE/Shadow		GE		GE		GE		
	ASSESS	Support	Rivet Joint, NTM		GMTI, Rivet Joint, NTM		Rivet Joint, NTM		Rivet Joint, NTM		Rivet Joint, NTM		Rivet Joint, NTM		
		Organic	GE, DIV CAV		Shadow & GE, TF RAIDER		Shadow & GE, TF RAIDER		DIV CAV		GE		GE		
Shaping	I CORPS	Fires			PAHALA						HURRICANES				
		16 CAB									OOCA HURRICANES				
		Focus	WILD		AXIS SMASH - CAPITALS				SABRES-HURRICANES						
	DIVISION	Focus	PREDATORS		PREDATORS SOUTH - WILD		AXIS SMASH, CAPITALS-PANTHERS				CONSOLIDATE GAINS		SABRES-HURRICANES		
		Fixed Wing	SCAR 672ND, 231ST		SCAR 672ND IFC, 231ST		SCAR - IFC, 231ST, 414TH		SCAR - 233RD, 231ST, 414TH		SCAR - 233RD, 231ST, 414TH				
		25 CAB	OOCA EA4 (SE KINGS), SPT BREACH		OOCA PRED, WILD		AASLT C/3-4, A/3-4 - OOCA EA5, ICA EA6		233RD, 231ST, 414TH FS/ADA SYSTEMS		233RD, 231ST, 414TH FS/ADA SYSTEMS				
		Fires	672ND, 231ST BAG/DAG		231ST BAG/DAG		IFC, 231ST, 414TH FS/ADA SYSTEMS		233RD, 231ST, 414TH FS/ADA SYSTEMS		233RD, 231ST, 414TH FS/ADA SYSTEMS				
		BRIGADES	Projected OBJ Ratio	FPOL - 76.2:1		BREACH & KINGS - 2.5:1		PREDS - 3.0:1		WILD - 2.5:1					
CFL / FSCL		CFL: MULLINS, FSCL: KEAN		CFL: KEAN, FSCL: SWIFT		CFL: BRADLEY o/o SWIFT, FSCL: WILLIAMS o/o MADDOX		CFL: WILLIAMS roll to CARTER, FSCL: MADDOX o/o POWELL		CFL: CARTER roll to WEYAND, FSCL: POWELL o/o FULLER		CFL: WEYAND, FSCL: FULLER			
Decisions/ Triggers			T1 - FPOL 3-4 CAV into AO LIGHTNING												
			T2 - FPOL 3-4 ID into AO LIGHTNING												
			T3 - BREACH at OBJ KINGS												
			D4 - Continue 3-4 ID ATK along AXIS SMASH or FPOL 1/25 ID												
			D5 - Transition assault from 1/25 ID to 1-2 ID												
			D6 - Transition to defense												
			T7 - FPOL 1 RoM DIV												

(Figure by Maj. Benjamin Scott, U.S. Army; G35 Future Operations. This product is based on a model taught by Dr. Bruce Stanley in the Advanced Military Studies Program at the School of Advanced Military Science)

Figure 4. Planning Covered a Seven-day Operation to Facilitate Deliberate Targeting

figure 3, page 23). This forced units to fight the enemy as he or she appeared, rather than fighting a script. Simulated enemy units and systems were essential to provide target identification and to replicate effects achieved against the constructive enemy formations. The simulation also provided constructive subordinate maneuver and fires brigades to trigger enemy actions and to provide training for the division's current operations staff. Absent a suitable virtual and constructive environment, CALFEX would not properly stimulate division and enabling brigade staff processes and would limit or degrade training opportunities. The Exercise Control–Mission Training Center, led by a planner and the division simulations officer and staffed with troops trained in the lead-up to execution, conducted these simulations operations.

Once planners created the simulated environment that would drive realism for CALFEX, the division expanded the scope of the exercise to support execution of a targeting process. As in WFX 19-01, the division used a ninety-six-hour targeting horizon to nest collection, maneuver, and fires within the air tasking order cycle.

Planners developed a corps-level operation to provide the contextual framework of a joint task force operation that extended for seven days (see figure 4, page 24). CALFEX resided within the fourth day of the plan that provided three days before and after to ensure the scenario supported the targeting horizon throughout the exercise. Division planners produced a division operations order that included graphics, a synchronization matrix, a visualization matrix, an execution checklist, and a decision support template and matrices.

Convergence at the Division Echelon

The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028 asserts that current convergence is insufficient to meet challenges of future operations against near-peer threats under current conditions.³ “The Joint Force currently converges capabilities through episodic synchronization of domain-federated solutions”; the next sentence in the pamphlet documents gaps in the form of requirements for continuous and rapid integration of multi-domain capabilities to achieve overmatch.⁴ To this end, the joint force must become sensor-shooter interoperable across all platforms and must develop a common operating picture. To present

the enemy with multiple dilemmas, the joint force must converge and integrate solutions and approaches before the battle starts.

Operating as part of the joint force, the 25th ID contacted a series of partners across the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility to seek its participation in Operation Lightning Strike to test and validate cross-domain aspects of the exercise. To achieve the training objective of layering joint-effects across multiple domains, the 25th ID received outstanding participation from Marine Corps Forces Pacific, who provided joint tactical air controllers and air naval gunfire liaison officers (LNOs). The U.S. Navy and Pacific Fleet provided the USS *Wayne E. Meyer*, an Aegis-equipped Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, and a naval gunfire LNO team that provided real-time execution of cross-domain (sea-to-land and land-to-sea) fires. Pacific Air Force Command from Indo-Pacific Command supported with its traditional complement of 25th Air Support Squadron personnel. The 25th Air Support Squadron personnel filled positions in the division JAGIC and provided the airspace management and air-ground integration of supporting aircraft out of Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in close coordination with the Marine Corps Joint Terminal Attack Controller teams embedded with the division reconnaissance squadron.

With its joint force partners, the 25th ID sought to integrate its mission command systems across upper tactical-infrastructure network to communicate directly between the division JAGIC and the Navy Fire Control Room aboard the *Wayne E. Meyer*. The division established a communication architecture that supported the direct connection between JADOCS and AFATDS from the 25th ID JAGIC directly to the *Wayne E. Meyer*'s gun fire control system and naval gun fire system.

Establishment of these mission command network architectures required deliberate planning that began three months prior to execution. With no existing relationship between the 25th ID and the U.S. Pacific Fleet staffs, the division executed a series of deliberate mission command thread tests. These thread tests worked through closed enclaves that initially precluded the 25th ID from establishing a sustained digital connection with the *Wayne E. Meyer*. While many existing firewalls between the

Air Force and the Army are familiar, this series of barriers was unknown for the division and required a redesign of the division JAGIC's mission command network-architecture to support.

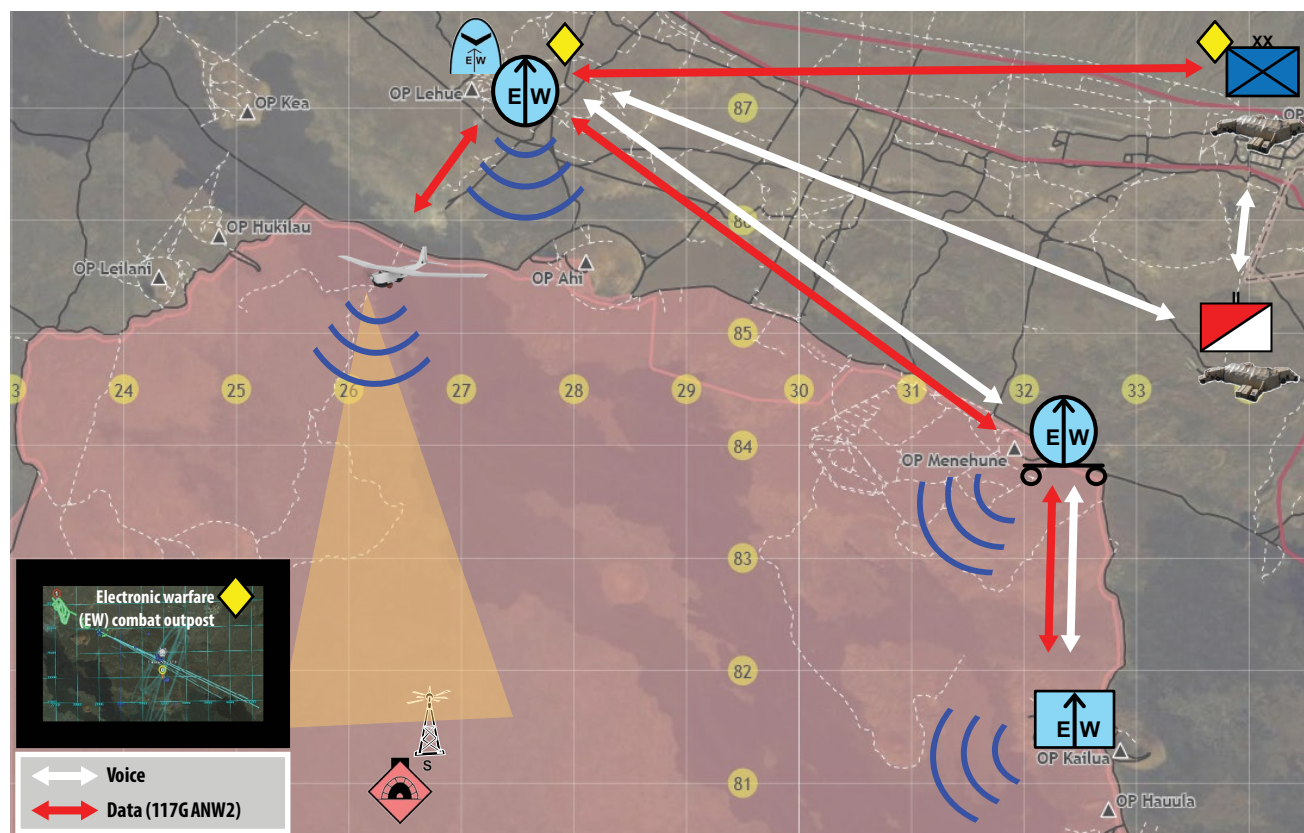
Having established formidable mission command architecture between the 25th ID and the Navy, the 25th ID JAGIC and *Wayne E. Meyer* sought to rehearse a series of deliberate cross-domain missions to validate the team's ability to *penetrate and disintegrate* enemy antiaccess/area denial systems and then *exploit* the resulting windows of opportunity that provide freedom of maneuver to the joint force. The first set of targets permitted the 25th ID to synchronize deliberate Tomahawk land-attack missile strikes and joint electronic attack with surface fires from the 25th DIVARTY against known enemy air defense targets to enable the division CAB's out-of-contact attacks in the division deep area. The 25th ID JAGIC planned, coordinated, and synchronized these strikes with naval gunfire LNOs and Air Force personnel in the JAGIC utilizing JADOCs and Naval Mako chat client. The Mako chat client is a naval messaging service that leverages the internet relay chat (IRC) and XMPP protocol. This service allows Mako Chat to operate in a low-bandwidth, high-latency environment with frequently interrupted satellite connectivity. With the 25th JAGIC tied directly into the MAKO chat client, it afforded the opportunity to leverage real-time chat communication between multiple users regardless of their geographic location. In this case, the locations included Schofield Barracks Mission Training Complex, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Pōhakuloa Training Area, and the *Wayne E. Meyer*. Although on the surface, Mako is similar to historical chat clients that Army users are familiar with, such as Transverse, Mako chat's unique capability accounts for low-bandwidth environments, and it allows the 25th ID to leverage a joint solution in complex communication environments. The target set was sent directly from aboard the *Wayne E. Meyer* to the 25th ID JAGIC against a sea-vessel threat that allowed effective target-execution using a high-mobility artillery rocket system from the 17th Field Artillery Brigade. The 25th DIVARTY prosecuted using available long-range attack munitions to enable freedom of navigation for the U.S. Navy. Though planners developed and rehearsed execution of these

fires as deliberate targets, in both cases, the timing and synchronization was conducted in a dynamic manner because neither the team from the 25th ID JAGIC nor the team aboard the *Wayne E. Meyer* were aware of the target location or sequence of events until queued by the exercise control team.

The Division's Cyberspace Electromagnetic Activities

Cyberspace electromagnetic activities (CEMA) were also integrated into the CALFEX.⁵ The primary CEMA objectives were to integrate tactical electronic-warfare support (ES) and to exercise units' abilities to operate in a denied, degraded, and disrupted space operational environment (D3SOE) (see figure 5, page 27).⁶ Key tasks in the integration of ES included providing electromagnetic spectrum situational awareness, establishing an electronic warfare common operating picture, and enabling targeting through the provision of timely, actionable information. To provide ES, the 25th ID G39 and the 3rd Infantry Brigade combat team personnel created an ad-hoc platoon to replicate the electronic warfare platoon force design update.⁷ This team employed the RQ-20A PUMA small unmanned aircraft system that was equipped with a spectral sieve, an ES payload, as well as ground systems such as the Resolve 3 in both mounted and dismounted configurations. These electronic warfare systems together integrated in a RaptorX framework using the CEMA advanced planning, execution, and review plug-in. Using these systems, the platoon successfully identified radio frequency emissions originating from emitters placed in the impact area and tied to simulated enemy and live-fire targets. Upon detection of the target emissions, the JAGIC and current-operations staff cued additional virtual and live intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms before employing lethal fires to destroy enemy formations.

To prepare for operations in D3SOE, the 25th ID employed the D3SOE training support package outside of live-fire periods. Elements of the 25th DIVARTY, 25th CAB, and individual aircraft were instructed on D3SOE and included specifics of organic space-enabled equipment. These units were then exposed to iterations of deliberately planned and executed GPS jamming by dismounted and



(Figure by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Zach Cervantes, U.S. Army; 25th Infantry Division G39)

Figure 5. Concept of Electronic Warfare Support during Lightning Strike

mounted systems. Jamming activities, conducted in the “crawl” and “walk” phases, thus set conditions for “run”-level training in future situational training and live-fire training events. This training provided firing batteries and aircraft the opportunities to operate in a degraded environment and to develop initial techniques and procedures to sustain the “kill chain,” survive, and fight with a more resilient command, control, and communications plan.

Outcomes

Lightning Strike 2019 exercised the 25th ID’s ability to incorporate tactics and capabilities from WFX 19-01 and validate division multi-domain deep operations and joint cross-domain fires in a live, virtual, and constructive exercise at the Pōhaku Training Area. The division employed the DIVARTY and CAB with a ground cavalry squadron to synchronize deep fires and maneuver in the counterreconnaissance and

counterfire fights. The division maneuvered rapidly to emplace firing units to extend the operational range of rockets while simultaneously employing weapons-locating radars to enable pattern analysis and proactive attacks against enemy long-range fires and air defense systems. The division then applied tempo and cross-domain maneuver in the form of air assaults, raids, and out-of-contact attacks to present multiple dilemmas to the enemy.

Ultimately, the balance of live and constructive environments forced the division and enabled brigade staffs to evaluate the best methods to synchronize fires and maneuver in the division deep area, manage transitions to the division close area, and enable constructive maneuver brigades to close with the enemy, seize terrain, and force enemy decisions favorable to friendly forces.

For joint interoperability and mission command, the exercise permitted the division to develop



procedures to better leverage joint enablers using current mission command systems to integrate cross-domain fires and effects from the Air Force and Navy. The division tested digital and voice communications to synchronize dynamic targets delivered from fixed-wing close air support, naval surface fires from the *Wayne E. Meyer*, and the integration of simulated electronic attack and nonlethal fires. These opportunities forced the division to build and manage airspace control measures that enabled permissive fires and did not force a trade-off between the delivery of multi-domain surface and air-to-surface fires. Procedures developed utilized existing mission command systems including AFATDS, JADOCS, Tactical Airspace Integration System, Theater Battle Management Core System, and Air and Missile Defense Workstation to permit a rapid synchronization of airspace and delivery of compounding effects against enemy high payoff targets in the division deep area. Finally, as the exercise provided an opportunity to identify procedures that increase joint interoperability, it also exposed the potential to expand future Lightning Strike training events as a multinational

Soldiers assigned to 3rd Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, 25th Infantry Division, prepare to fire a 155 mm artillery round from an M777 howitzer 13 April 2019 during Operation Lightning Strike 2019 at Pōhaku-Loa Training Area, Island of Hawaii, Hawaii. (Photo by Pvt. Lawrence Broadnax, U.S. Army)

exercise with partners and allies in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility.

Lightning Strike 2019 permitted the division to expand some of the MDO lessons from previous multi-domain exercises like Rim of the Pacific Exercise 18 and WFX 19-01. The exercise gave the division JAGIC an opportunity to synchronize cross-domain fires with the best sensor and the best shooter to enable cross-domain maneuvers. By augmenting the existing JAGIC with a naval gun LNO and marine fire control team, the division acquired the resident experts to dynamically retask joint detection and delivery assets to find, destroy, assess, and reattack division targets from the high payoff target list to achieve the best effects. By leveraging the joint targeting process, the JAGIC achieved lethal effects

in the live environment and layered nonlethal effects in the constructive environment to create windows of opportunity described in MDO doctrine. These opportunities contributed to increased readiness for the 25th ID to complete its mission by fighting with fires in a multi-domain environment and helped identify specific authorities and mission command processes required to establish the timing, tempo, and synchronization to achieve effects.

The ability for the division to replicate a D3SOE at a home station through a live, virtual, and constructive integrated training exercise presented the opportunity to fight in a degraded environment and identify methods to sustain the effectiveness of the division fires enterprise. The employment of jammers that disrupted or denied critical position, navigation, and timing and communications forced the division to train and identify additional capabilities required to increase the resiliency of sensor to shooter linkages. The training also forced command posts at echelon to focus on the deception, decoys, and efforts to reduce electromagnetic spectrum emissions to increase survivability.

The exercise exposed shortcomings in live execution that were not identified during WFX 19-01. First, CABs do not possess the capacity to serve as the division reconnaissance task force with current modified tables of organization and equipment. Fires planning and execution, intelligence, and maneuver planning are significant shortfalls for this role; for success, the combat aviation brigade would require significant augmentation. Second, units have become overly reliant on the upper tactical internet for command

and control of division operations as a result of the WFX and other simulations exercises. This exercise demonstrated the necessity for command posts to refine primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency communications and to develop procedures to increase the resiliency of these plans.

Units must focus training to operate on both primary and alternate communications plans simultaneously to sustain sensor to shooter kill chains. Training on the contingency communications plan requires additional focus so that when primary and alternate communications plans fail, units do not lose the ability to fight. Third, the 25th ID's training to-date has not adequately incorporated the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps to the extent required to achieve seamless integration.

Way Forward

The 25th ID will build on successes and lessons from Lightning Strike 2019 by integrating proven practices and improving upon systems and techniques found unusable when executed live. Over the upcoming months, the division will incorporate and further develop the validated tactics, techniques, and procedures required to fully achieve readiness to fight and win in a multi-domain environment during large-scale ground combat operations. The division will practice in command post exercises what it developed in Lightning Strike 2019 and will then test refined practices in Lightning Strike 2020. From the division-level, successful adherence to all three tenets requires seamless synchronization with and leveraging of national-level and joint assets beyond experience of previous training and exercises. ■

Notes

1. U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, 6 December 2018), 2–6.

2. *Ibid.*, iii, 15–17.

3. *Ibid.*, 20.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*, 19–20.

6. U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM), "FORSCOM Command Training Guidance – Fiscal Year 2019" (Fort Bragg, NC: FORSCOM, 7 August 2018), 13–14.

7. Office of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7, "HQDA Form 5 – Electronic Warfare Platoon Force Design Update" (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 21 February 2019), Tab A.

We Are Missing Opportunities to Build Sustained, Total Force Readiness inside Brigade Combat Teams

Lt. Col. Nicholas Melin, DPhil, U.S. Army

Building readiness to fight and to win in large-scale combat operations is the Army's number one priority, and the Army's combat training centers (CTCs) are the crucible where the capabilities of the Army's primary fighting formations, brigade combat teams (BCTs), are tested. The train-up for and execution of a CTC rotation is how a BCT is made ready for combat; funding, personnel, training time, and priority for training resources all funnel to BCTs to allow commanders to certify their units from squad through battalion levels. Once CTC training is complete, the unit is deemed ready for worldwide deployment. In fact, one could argue that the CTC rotation is the primary way the Army builds BCT readiness.

There is, however, a gap in the Army's approach to building BCT readiness that needs further emphasis. That gap lies in the hundreds of echelons-above-brigade (EAB) enablers that are task-organized to a BCT both at the CTC and when deployed to combat. These units, which in total amount to an entire additional battalion (over five hundred soldiers) of combat power, are prepared for deployment individually by their EAB battalions and brigades but have *no habitual relationships* with the BCTs they will support. BCTs and their attached enablers meet at the CTC, train together for a month, and then scatter across the United States to their parent units. The BCT does not build readiness with its enablers ahead of the CTC, nor does it sustain them during the post-CTC period when the likelihood of deployment to crisis or contingency is highest.

This article highlights the challenges posed by the current approach to integrating enablers into BCTs, identifies steps BCTs can take now, and offers institutional recommendations for *formal, regional* alignment of enablers from across the Total Force with BCTs and

“ Hundreds of echelons-above-brigade enablers ... have *no habitual relationships* with the brigade combat teams they will support. ”

divisions. This alignment *must* be anchored to CTC rotations and should take into account units identified as deploying together in contingency plans. With habitual relationships in place and the CTC as a shared crucible experience, leaders can build and sustain BCT and enabler readiness.

The Training Center Experience for BCTs and Their Enablers

BCT commanders and their staffs devote themselves to building readiness for decisive action ahead of a CTC rotation. Training glide paths are carefully managed, pre-CTC gates are met, and mission command nodes are validated, among other actions. Divisions certify their BCTs on decisive action tasks and rigorously

manage the unit's equipment, personnel, and maintenance status to ensure the BCT can make the most of its once-every-two-year (or five-year in the case of National Guard BCTs) crucible experience. By the time vehicles are rolling onto the trains before a unit's trip to the training center, the organic units in a BCT are prepared to task-organize and execute their missions.

Then the EAB enablers show up. Converging on the BCT in the few days before the beginning of a rotation at the training center itself, units varying in size from team to platoon to company arrive with a set of capabilities and requirements that may or may not be fully understood. They come from across the United States and in large numbers (often twenty or more separate organizations). It is not uncommon for a platoon- or company-size element from one coast to support a BCT stationed on the opposite coast, thousands of miles away. Moreover, they come from across the Total Force. Since 75 percent of the Army's enablers reside in the Army Reserve or National Guard, it is likely that the BCT task force will engage in decisive action that has elements within it from every component of the Army.¹

While BCT leadership is generally notified of enablers that they will receive as many as six months ahead

of time, multiple factors combine to make meaningful integration into the BCT incomplete at best. With enabling units scattered across the United States, there is no opportunity to train together. The best that can often be managed are teleconferences to track movement timelines and maintenance, and maybe a shared planning opportunity ahead of the rotation itself. Because the active, National Guard, and Army Reserve units that attend the CTC together likely have no habitual relationship with each other or the BCT they support, getting to know all of the faces and names of the leadership during the reception, staging, onward movement, and integration phase of the CTC can be a challenge.

The experience for the attached enablers is no less jarring. Because EAB enablers are trained and certified on their specialty capabilities separately from maneuver formations, they are oftentimes unfamiliar with the BCT's standard operating procedures and have likely not had

Soldiers from Company A, 116th Brigade Engineer Battalion, position their M1150 Assault Breacher Vehicle 12 June 2019 during a live-fire training exercise at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California. (Photo by Cpl. Alisha Grezlik, U.S. Army)



the opportunity to integrate into a maneuver element. They have different equipment and communications systems than the BCT into which they integrate, and depending upon their training glide path, they may be at a lower level of readiness than the BCT they support. BCT staff sections lack experience planning for enabler utilization, and the maneuver platoons, companies, and battalions in the BCT have little to no experience using them. Additionally, the maintenance and support requirements associated with enabler equipment, like

“ Because echelons-above-brigade enablers are trained and certified on their specialty capabilities separately from maneuver formations, they are oftentimes unfamiliar with the brigade combat team’s standard operating procedures. ”

the M113 armored personnel carrier and assault vehicle launch bridge, are often completely different than that of the BCT they may be tasked to support. Nevertheless, maintenance and support is the BCT’s responsibility.

The brigade engineer battalion (BEB) is the unit within the BCT charged to integrate and ensure the proper utilization of the enablers flowing into the BCT. While BEB commanders and their staffs understand that integrating and effectively utilizing enablers is their decisive operation, these units are already responsible for ensuring that enablers organic to the brigade are properly utilized. Because the BEB more than doubles in size during a CTC rotation to a task force that generally numbers between 1,000 and 1,200 soldiers and at least twenty subordinate units, keeping track of all the enablers in the BCT area of operations becomes a significant challenge, let alone managing the effective integration of enablers into units with which they have never trained.

Although success in integrating and utilizing enablers varies from unit to unit, it is possible to identify a number of systemic issues, as cataloged by observer-controller teams in CTC rotation after CTC rotation that impact BCT success:

- Brigade and maneuver battalion staffs struggle when planning for enabler utilization due to a lack of familiarity with enabler capabilities and limitations.
- Enablers are often improperly used or left in the rear area by maneuver units, due largely to a lack of familiarity with proper enabler utilization and a lack of personal relationships between maneuver leaders and the enablers supporting them.
- Perhaps most importantly, maneuver units often culminate prior to accomplishing their assigned missions because the right enabling capabilities (whether engineer, chemical, military intelligence, military police, signal, or civil affairs) are either not present or not utilized effectively at a decisive point in the operation.

While these lessons are cataloged in after action reviews and enabler integration is written in to post-CTC standard operating procedures at all levels, once the trains are loaded again, the BCT returns to its home station and the enablers scatter across the United States to theirs. The shared readiness accrued through having a BCT train with and learn from the enablers it received for the CTC dissipates, and units return to their stovepiped training glide paths.

The Impacts

Including enabler units in the BCT formation is ineffective unless their capabilities are understood by the decision-makers responsible for their employment, namely the company- to brigade-level maneuver commanders and planners. For example, decisive action rotations at the National Training Center (NTC) regularly involve chemical attacks of persistent or non-persistent agents against rotational units that require establishment of a thorough decontamination point. BCTs may have up to four types of chemical platoons attached to their BCT to accomplish this mission. However, typically, the BCT has trained with at most one of these formation types during home-station preparation. Thus, maneuver planners and logisticians have little understanding of how long a deliberate decontamination mission takes or what resources must be in place to conduct the operation.

Because home-station relationships between EAB enablers and BCTs are informal, inclusion of EAB enablers into BCT training is episodic and often personality based. For one set of commanders, EAB enabler integration might be a priority, while the next set may



have a different approach. The net effect of the lack of formality regarding home-station relationships is that organic units tend to train organically, and EAB units train in their EAB stovepipe. The units do not truly train the way they would fight at a CTC or in combat until they participate in a CTC rotation.

While the enabler units and the BCTs benefit from training together at the CTC, there is an opportunity cost to building relationships with enablers through a crucible experience like NTC and then dissolving the team. Moreover, since BCTs tend to train organic at home station, there is a steep learning curve at CTCs that deprives the maneuver battalions, the BEB, and the brigade staff of training opportunities to refine their integration and utilization of enablers.

Perhaps most importantly, there is a long-term deficit in BCT and maneuver force awareness of EAB enabler requirements and shortcomings. Because they do not train together, the difference in capabilities such as mobility, communications, and training is simply not a priority in division and corps training guidance for the BCT. BCT commanders register that there is an issue when at a CTC, but this recedes to the background

A soldier from the 44th Chemical Company sprays water on another soldier who was exposed to a simulated chemical agent at a field decontamination station 13 March 2019 during a training rotation at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California. (Photo by Clemens Gaines, 20th CBRNE Command Public Affairs)

quickly upon redeployment to home station and focus shifts back to organic BCT training.

Challenges to Enabler Integration

If enabler integration is such an issue, why are enablers not habitually aligned with BCTs already? This is a fair question to ask, given the challenges detailed above, regarding why the Army continues to manage enablers in the way it does.

The first part of the answer is tied to the Army's approach to building deployable units tailored to match the requirements of a given crisis or contingency. Training enablers separately and attaching them to BCTs prior to a CTC or deployment is intended to (1) ensure that low-density enablers are effectively trained at home station, (2) allow for flexible

distribution of EAB capabilities to BCTs based on mission requirements, and (3) facilitate integration of Army Reserve and National Guard units into BCTs in accordance with the Army's Total Force Policy.²

Unlike the divisional structure that preceded it, the Army's modular-force sizing construct relies on the ability of the BCT to receive, integrate, and utilize enablers. Even with the Army's BCT 2020 force redesign decision to include a third maneuver battalion and to stand up BEBs with additional enabling capabilities, the force design for BCTs deliberately did not include all enabling capabilities that would be required in decisive action.³

The second part of the answer is tied to the availability of enablers themselves and their readiness timelines. With 75 percent of the Army's enabling units, whether maneuver support or sustainment in the Army Reserve and the National Guard, enablers are physically spread across the United States. Moreover, Reserve and National Guard units generate readiness on a five-year model, with a CTC and follow-on deployment occurring in the fourth or fifth year of a given unit's readiness cycle. This means that of the total pool of enabling capabilities in the Total Force, only a portion of the Reserve or National Guard capability is available at a given time.

Another factor hampering habitual alignment is the challenge of forecasting readiness and availability of a multitude of small, deployable enabler units. Unlike BCTs, EAB units are deployable down to the company, platoon, and often team levels. Because they deploy independently, within a single EAB battalion, there can be multiple units at different levels of readiness.

The way that Forces Command (FORSCOM) and CTC planners build rotations also impacts the problem. CTCs generally identify the enabler requirements for a given rotation about two years out from execution. Neither the CTC nor FORSCOM currently have a requirement to regionally align enablers to BCTs, so they do not. When one adds in unforecasted requirements at CTCs, like a chemical-focused rotation requiring augmentation of additional chemical units to a BCT on short notice, the actual sourcing of enablers to a BCT's

Soldiers from Company A, 23rd Brigade Engineer Battalion, dig an antitank ditch to turn enemy mounted forces into the primary defensive engagement area 20 April 2018 at Fort Irwin, California. (Photo courtesy of the National Training Center Operations Group Maneuver Support Training Team)



CTC rotation becomes a shell game where available, ready units are tasked rather than those units that might be able to train with a BCT at home station or deploy with them on a contingency operation.

The final and maybe most important factor is inertia. Because enablers have not been habitually aligned, and are assigned to CTCs and deployed based on who is ready at a given time, the readiness cycles of units in a given area are not aligned. Changing to a new approach would require sustained institutional energy and forecasting years out from CTC execution in the case of Army Reserve and National Guard units. This sort of shift would require hard work and senior leader emphasis, and it would need to start with the maneuver commanders at a brigade, division, and corps levels who drive the Army's readiness discussion.

What Units Can Do Now to Improve Enabler Integration

BCTs and their subordinate battalions must recognize that they will fight as a task force with EAB enablers, whether at a CTC or while deployed. These enabler units are not last-minute add-ons. They provide capabilities the maneuver element does not have organically by design, and which are required for mission accomplishment.

Commanders, understanding this fact, must drive education within their staffs and subordinate commands on enabler capabilities, limitations, and support requirements. Units should plan for the use of enablers during staff exercises and command-post exercises at all levels. Developing a standard enabler task organization for both the offense and the defense (see figure 1, page 36), building doctrinal templates for enabler employment (see figure 2, page 37), and rehearsing battle drills for enabler-intensive operations are all important steps BCTs can take to build proficiency with enablers, speed up planning, and ensure shared understanding with subordinate units.

Maneuver leaders from brigade to platoon level need repetition at both planning for and utilizing enablers before they arrive at a CTC. The wrong time to start figuring out how to use enablers such as engineers, chemical, civil affairs, and explosive ordnance disposal is when they show up immediately prior to mission execution. Importantly, the BEB also needs practice repetitions at integrating and then providing mission command for enablers from outside the BCT—the more, the better.

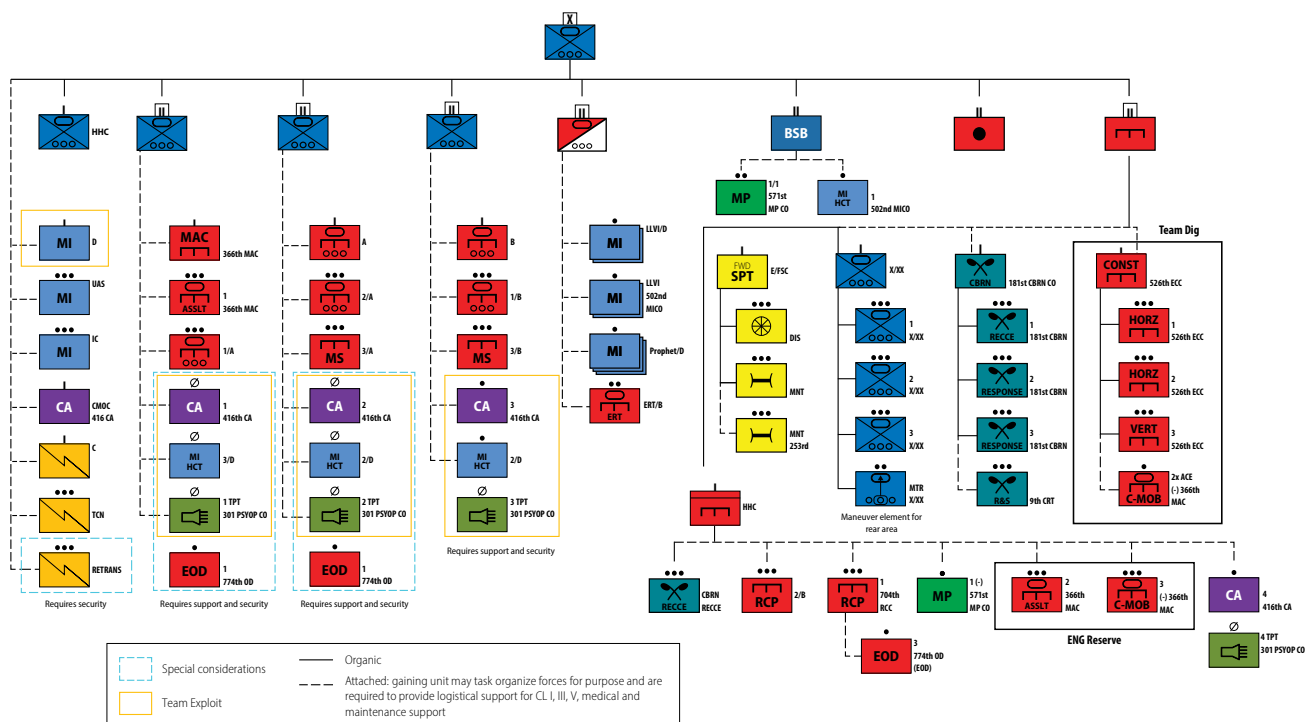
Given the reality that BCTs and their subordinate battalions will likely not be able to train with the enablers they will have before deploying to a CTC or during combat, there must be a deliberate system for building relationships with enablers and integrating them into the formation. While checklists can be helpful tools, units must treat enabler integration as a tactical task that must be practiced during home-station training. BCTs should reach out to enabler units at their home station, establish a rapport with them, and deliberately integrate their elements into the maneuver training glide path.

BCTs also need to own the readiness challenges of the enabler units they will get on relatively short notice and prepare for additional support requirements upon the arrival of those units. Each unit's equipment, communications capabilities, and training readiness will be different. In many cases, this means different maintenance and supply requirements that are not easily solved in the final days before mission execution. To minimize the friction caused by the arrival of multiple units with different support requirements and states of readiness, BCTs should reach out early and often to work out issues with their enablers well ahead of formal task organization. This is a best practice already encouraged by the CTCs.

Recommendations for Institutional Change

While the immediate steps highlighted above are necessary, they are insufficient. There is an overriding need to generate sustained, Total Force readiness at the BCT level. The below institutional recommendations can be phased in over time but must be formal in their implementation, anchored to CTC rotations, and messaged by senior Army leadership to truly have impact.

Lt. Col. Nicholas Melin, U.S. Army, commands 5th Battalion, 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade. He holds a BS from the United States Military Academy, an MMAS from the Command and General Staff College, and a DPhil from Oxford University. He previously commanded the 23rd Brigade Engineer Battalion, 1-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team, at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. He has also served as a special assistant to the eighteenth and nineteenth chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in the Chief of Staff of the Army's Strategic Studies Group, and as brigade executive officer for 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division.



(Figure courtesy of the 23rd Brigade Engineer Battalion, 1-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Joint Base Lewis-McChord)

Figure 1. Enabler Task Organization Example

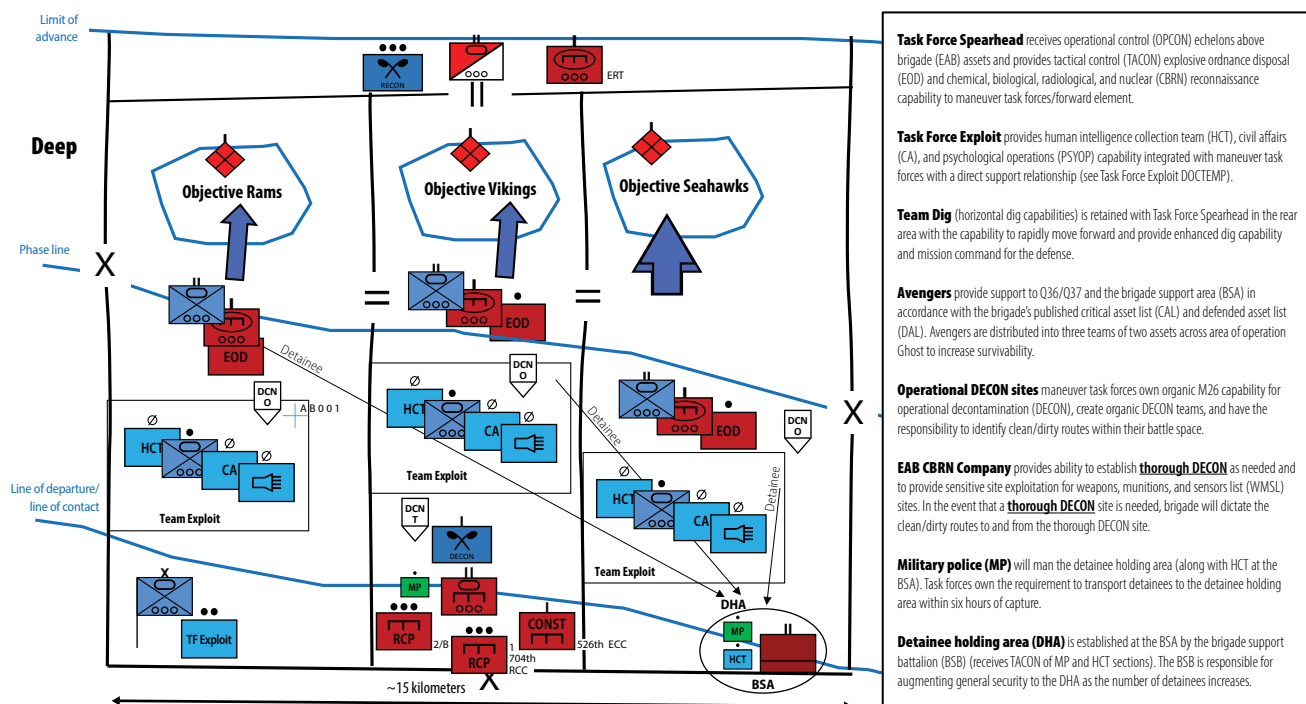
Identify the EAB enabler force's available pool, both active and reserve in a specific region, and formally align with BCTs for CTC rotations and deployments. Within a given region (the Pacific Northwest, for instance), there are typically sufficient active duty, National Guard, and Army Reserve enabler units to support BCT training, CTC rotations, and deployment to meet contingency plan requirements. The problem is that there are no formal relationships to drive them to align their training glide paths. Division- and corps-level staffs can and will align training to help the BCT integrate these key capabilities if they have the authority and the funding. It should be a requirement for FORSCOM and CTC planners to take into account regional alignment when conducting both CTC rotational planning and contingency planning. FORSCOM should also strongly consider requiring enablers to attend their aligned BCT's pre-CTC certification exercises.

Deliberately integrate enablers into organic BCT home-station training. Within the Active Component alone, there are typically sufficient enabling capabilities to allow BCTs to get multiple repetitions with the utilization of enablers. This is sometimes accomplished informally

but is seldom driven through higher guidance. Because EABs are typically corps assets, formal training guidance directing the integration of enablers into home-station training would have to come from that echelon. This could be standardized in the form of habitual relationships.

Align time-phased force deployment data construction for operation plans against regional Active Component and Reserve Component force pools. Once regional force pools are generated and units are building sustained readiness at the BCT level, the next logical step would be to align BCTs with the enablers against operation plans. This would also further cement and formalize relationships between BCTs and enablers in their regional pool.

Refocus Active Component-Reserve Component partnership on the BCT task force in decisive action. More formal BCT-enabler unit relationships present an important opportunity. Currently, Active-Reserve partnerships are predominantly focused at the BCT or EAB level. While it is valuable to build relationships with a potential adjacent unit, it is probably more important for a BCT to integrate Reserve Component-enabling capabilities that will be inside the BCT task force when it fights.



(Figure courtesy of the 23rd Brigade Engineer Battalion, 1-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Joint Base Lewis-McChord)

Figure 2. Doctrinal Template Example

Formalize the relationship between BEBs within each BCT and habitually partnered units. The BEB can and should remain the focal point for enabler integration into the BCT and can take the lead for enforcing the Total Force partnership program down to the lowest echelons. BEB commanders should be responsible for maintaining relationships with the Reserve Component units they will deploy with to either execute a CTC or fight and for coordinating their integration into BCT training.

Nest enablers into BCT modernization strategies. As the Army aggressively modernizes to meet the challenge posed by near-peer adversaries, BCTs should both train and modernize *with the enablers they will have attached to them*. A significant equipping gap already exists between BCTs and enabling formations, which if unaddressed during the Army's modernization process, will only widen. The overall performance of a BCT in combat should not be adversely impacted because its enablers are operating on outdated mission command systems and moving in platforms that are unable to match the pace of combat operations. Aligning BCT and attached enabler training and modernization would be

consistent with the Army's doctrine on training, which states that "units train to fight and win as cohesive and effective teams" under "challenging and realistic conditions that closely replicate an operational environment."⁴

Conclusion

The Army trains and certifies maneuver units at every level because it recognizes that fundamentally, the whole is more than the sum of its parts. A trained BCT is more than simply a group of trained battalions. Instead, it is an integrated team that is capable of task-organizing for purpose and fluidly executing both anticipated and unanticipated missions.

A trained BCT that is ready for decisive action is likewise more than the trained organic unit with a bunch of task-organized enablers that were trained separately and attached to the BCT immediately prior to executing the mission. For the team to operate effectively together, it must be able to task-organize at echelon and incorporate enablers throughout the entire training glide path.

Maintaining the current approach to enabler integration risks repeating the hard lessons learned at every CTC rotation during the opening days of a future

conflict. When that occurs, the cost will be soldiers' lives rather than wasted time and suboptimal training. By establishing formal, regional BCT-enabler unit

relationships anchored on CTC rotations, the Army can build sustained Total Force readiness focused on the BCT; it is worth the effort. ■

Notes

1. Analysis for this statistic was conducted by the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. For engineers alone, based on 2019 updates to Engineer Tables of Distribution and Allowances, 50 percent of the engineer force structure resides in the National Guard, with 25 percent in the U.S. Army Reserve and only 25 percent in the active component. For many maneuver support capabilities, the percentage is even higher. For example, 82 percent of civil affairs and military information support operations units reside in the Army Reserve.

2. John M. McHugh, Memorandum to Principal Officials of Headquarters, Department of the Army, "Army Directive 2012-08 (Army Total

Force Policy)," 4 September 2012, accessed 25 October 2019, https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ad2012_08.pdf.

3. Mark F. Cancian, "U.S. Military Forces in FY 2020" (report, Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 2019), accessed 25 October 2019, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-military-forces-fy-2020-army>.

4. Army Doctrinal Publication 7-0, *Training* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, August 2012 [obsolete]), para. 1-4 and 1-5.

Congratulations on your retirement, Linda!



M

rs. Linda Darnell, editorial assistant for *Military Review*, is retiring in May 2020 from the Army Civilian Corps after serving on Fort Leavenworth for more than twenty-five years. She previously worked in the Civilian Personnel Office; Combat Training Center Directorate; Combined Arms Services Staff School (CAS3); the Army Knowledge Network Directorate; and the Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobility, and Security.

While serving at *Military Review*, Mrs. Darnell was relentless not only in her pursuit of excellence in the discharge of her assigned duties as a key staff figure but also in promoting a warm, congenial, and professional work environment that was second to none. In May 2014, she was awarded the

prestigious U.S. Federal Government Excellence in Public Service award for her many contributions. However, when asked what she would wish to be remembered as her legacy, she confided that she does not wish to be remembered merely as an efficient and supportive staff colleague but rather as a "mother" figure who diligently sought to ensure that everyone within the circumference of her influence was remembered, loved, and cared for.

She departs as a treasured and respected member of the *Military Review* team who has been regarded for the last eleven years as truly indispensable. We will miss Linda very much, and we wish her and her husband, Tom, a long and happy retirement.





Members of a joint force austere surgical team offload gear 29 November 2017 following a mission in Afghanistan. Consisting in this case of five members, the team carries all of the required equipment to provide one operating table and two resuscitation bays by hand, minimizing its footprint on the aircraft. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Douglas Ellis, U.S. Air Force)

Death Ignores the Golden Hour

The Argument for Mobile, Farther-Forward Surgery

Lt. Col. Brian C. Beldowicz, MD, U.S. Army

Maj. Michael Bellamy, DO, U.S. Army

Maj. Robert Modlin, U.S. Army

The employment of emergency surgical assets has defined military medical planning since 2001. Although the footprint of medical resources has significantly contracted in recent years, the geography of ongoing operations has not. As a result, at-risk soldiers find themselves reliant on more tenuous limbs of medical support, far removed from the meticulously orchestrated medical evacuation (medevac) rings once deemed an operational imperative. The first hour after the occurrence of a traumatic injury is considered the most critical for emergency stabilization of a casualty. This “Golden Hour” concept establishes a serviceable standard for the distribution of fixed medical resources supporting areas of operation. However, the Golden Hour paradigm is insufficient for large-scale combat operations (LSCO), specifically when planning medical support for those offensive operations associated with the highest risk to force or those conducted in movement-restricted environments where timely medevac is not guaranteed. In order to provide ground force commanders with options for risk reduction consistent with best medical practice, medical planning will need to recalibrate from the prevailing Golden Hour paradigm to a more deliberate mission support model. Planners must consider operational importance, asymmetric distribution of risk to force, and available surgical assets’ capacity to influence preventable combat mortality and improve the efficiency of the casualty care system.

Only Half of Casualties with Potentially Survivable Lethal Injuries Will Survive the Golden Hour

A 2012 analysis of combat casualties from the first decade of post-9/11 conflict serves as a valuable foundation for planning medical support for offensive operations. The study analyzed nearly 4,600 combat fatalities in Iraq and Afghanistan through June 2011 and found that 87.3 percent of deaths occurred prior to hospital arrival. Of those deaths, approximately one in four was deemed potentially survivable from a strictly medical perspective, which means prehospital care and evacuation influenced up to one thousand combat-related deaths by 2011.¹ This study makes clear that to meaningfully impact combat casualty survival, attention and resources must focus on improving prehospital care and shortening time from injury to surgery.

In 2009, former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates established the Golden Hour standard for

theaters of conflict that distributed coalition surgical and medevac assets to ensure an injured soldier could arrive at a medical treatment facility within sixty minutes of being injured, calling the standard both a “matter of morale” and a “moral obligation.” This policy has been credited with saving as many as 359 lives between 2009 and 2013 by increasing the number of soldiers for whom surgical hemorrhage control could be achieved prior to dying from severe blood loss.²

A 2014 study of more than a decade of early trauma deaths in a statewide civilian trauma system determined that the classically described Golden Hour would result in access to life-saving surgery for only about half of those who need it; to afford access to surgery for 95 percent of patients with potentially lethal injuries, the time from injury to surgery would need to be reduced to twenty-three minutes. This interval was reduced even further, to nineteen minutes, for patients sustaining a penetrating mechanism of injury, as is more commonly seen in combat.³

The Gates policy was successful because it substantially improved upon the previously established two-hour standard, and it continues to serve as a reasonable standard for establishing medical support for stability operations where numerous operations of similar risk are geographically dispersed. The Golden Hour standard, however, is inadequate for planning decisive operations, where the risk to a specific unit is heightened but temporally limited and geographically confined. Such operations demand the commitment of sufficient resources for a higher standard of risk mitigation than the Golden Hour paradigm, and it is specifically the finite limitation of heightened risk in time and space that makes such a higher standard tactically and logistically feasible.

Similarly, medical support planning for LSCO requires revision of the prevailing area-support model. While logistically more challenging, proper positioning of far-forward surgical assets is imperative in peer-to-peer conflict. In LSCO, the availability of large medical elements is restricted by exposure to enemy fires and hybrid threats. Casualty evacuation, meanwhile, is subject to ground-centric movement schemes stemming from a contested air domain. Although casualty volume is expected to exceed treatment, hospitalization, and patient movement capacities, by executing expert casualty triage and stabilizing

interventions, far-forward surgical assets will negate the effects of evacuation hinderances.⁴

Hemorrhage remains the greatest killer on the battlefield. In 2018, the Committee on Tactical Combat Casualty Care incorporated the concepts of advanced resuscitative care (ARC) to address pre-hospital hemorrhagic death and support dynamics.⁵ Intended to minimize unnecessary death on the battlefield, ARC employs the principles of on-target blood transfusion, early control of hemorrhage not amenable to external compression or tourniquets (known as noncompressible torso hemorrhage), and far-forward access to damage control surgery. Because the demands of ARC extend beyond what an operational unit can issue and a ground-force medic can carry, the concept created new expectations for medical operational support planning that targets the largest source of preventable combat death.

On-Target Blood Transfusion

A 2018 review of more than forty-five hundred casualties found that patients who received a required blood transfusion on the battlefield were more likely to reach the hospital alive compared to those who did not receive a needed transfusion.⁶ This followed a 2017 study of more than five hundred combat casualties that found casualties who received a blood transfusion before arriving at a field hospital were 3.6 times more likely to survive the first twenty-four hours after injury and twice as likely to survive for at least thirty days.⁷

Planning recommendations. An optimal medical plan would enable the initiation of blood transfusion in close proximity to the place and time of injury, in the prehospital setting, without delaying the rapid evacuation of the casualty to a surgical capability. Maintaining a supply of transfusable blood products on target should be considered a medical logistics priority. In most cases, this

Lt. Col. Brian C. Beldowicz, MD, U.S. Army, is a trauma/critical care surgeon with a master's degree in bioethics and health policy. An assistant professor at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Beldowicz has served as an advisor with Joint Special Operations Command's Joint Medical Augmentation Unit since 2012.

supply chain can be coupled to the medical evacuation chain. Ground medics receive resupply from medevac personnel, who in turn are resupplied by the receiving medical unit. This exchange, however, requires adequate planning and coordination with supporting medical units and treatment facilities to obtain and position the necessary blood products.

Early Control of Hemorrhage

Hemorrhage accounts for 91 percent of potentially survivable prehospital battlefield deaths. Of those deaths, 13.5 percent are due to extremity hemorrhage. To address this, the military standardized the issue, familiarization, and training of combat tourniquets throughout the force, reducing the death rate from extremity hemorrhage by 85 percent, from an average of 23.3 deaths per year to 3.5 deaths per year.⁸

Newer technology emerging in both civilian and military practice may facilitate presurgical hemorrhage control in the remaining 79 percent of potentially survivable prehospital deaths caused by noncompressible torso hemorrhage. Resuscitative endovascular balloon occlusion of the aorta (REBOA) refers to both the equipment and the technique of inserting a balloon-tipped catheter through an artery in the groin and inflating the balloon in the aorta to arrest the flow of blood to the site of the injury. Such occlusion can arrest hemorrhage from abdominal, pelvic, or junctional blood vessels, buying time to achieve definitive surgical control before the patient bleeds to death. The earlier-referenced 2012 analysis

Maj. Michael Bellamy, DO, U.S. Army, is an emergency medicine physician at Womack Army Medical Center, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and a surgical resuscitation team member. His military background includes assignments as a flight surgeon with 3rd Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne), and chief of the Department of Emergency Medicine, Martin Army Community Hospital, Fort Benning, Georgia.

Maj. Robert Modlin, U.S. Army, is a medical operations officer in the Joint Special Operations Command. His military background includes medical operations positions in maneuver, special operations, and medical units.

of combat fatalities suggests that up to 62 percent of potentially survivable combat injuries that resulted in death could have benefited from REBOA.⁹

The caveat to this technology, however, is that there are potentially significant life-threatening metabolic consequences associated with the cessation of blood flow to abdominal organs and extremity musculature. Current recommendations suggest complete aortic occlusion in the distal chest can be sustained for up to forty minutes and in the pelvis for up to sixty minutes. Experience with combat casualties has demonstrated successful outcomes associated with aortic occlusion ranging from seven to thirty-four minutes.¹⁰ However, animal studies performed at military medical research centers have shown that the metabolic consequences of greater than sixty minutes of complete aortic occlusion are lethal.¹¹ REBOA must, therefore, be employed only as a component of a more comprehensive system of evacuation, resuscitation, and timely, definitive control of traumatic hemorrhage.

Planning recommendations. Though experience with the therapeutic benefit of REBOA continues to accumulate in civilian and military applications, its use in the prehospital setting remains experimental. The theoretical value of prehospital REBOA is in its potential to extend the amount of time before a casualty bleeds to death from noncompressible torso hemorrhage. REBOA should not be considered as a primary method of risk mitigation but rather as an adjunct when it is not possible to position a surgical element to achieve a time from injury to surgery of less than twenty minutes.

The procedure requires a minimum of eight to ten minutes to perform, even in the most competent hands.¹² Plans incorporating REBOA into operational medical support should aim to have the initiation of the procedure within fifteen minutes of injury in order to have a theoretical chance to benefit up to 95 percent of eligible casualties. It must be determined whether it is more feasible to move the casualty to the provider, the provider to the casualty, or some aggregation of both to achieve colocation as quickly as possible.

The downstream logistical demands of REBOA are extensive. For one, REBOA can reduce the volume of ongoing blood loss, but for any survival benefit to be realized, the blood already lost will need to be replaced as soon as possible. Therefore, blood transfusion on-target

and during evacuation are essential, and massive transfusion volumes should be expected in the majority of REBOA patients. Additionally, because the metabolic consequences of aortic occlusion begin to accumulate at the moment of inflation, it is essential that casualties reach a surgical unit within thirty minutes of REBOA placement. Otherwise, any decrease in prehospital deaths from hemorrhage will be negated by in-hospital deaths from subsequent organ failure.

Prehospital REBOA should not be considered when adequate blood product resuscitation and expedient transfer time to surgery of less than thirty minutes from aortic occlusion cannot be achieved. REBOA casualties with resultant multisystem organ failure in austere environments would consume extensive resources, significantly undermining the support of ongoing operations, with no demonstrated benefit in survival.

Far-Forward Damage Control Surgery

In 1982, surgeons identified a cohort of patients that sustained life-threatening injuries and died a short time after surgery despite the successful repair of their injuries. These patients, they observed, were dying of the accumulation of the metabolic consequences of injury and their subsequent treatment, a mutually reinforcing lethal triad of low blood pressure, hypothermia, and impaired blood clotting.¹³ It would take almost thirty years for the identification and widespread adoption of damage control principles that prevent, interdict, and reverse these metabolic insults, improving the chance of survival for some of the most grievously injured patients.

The goal of damage control surgery is to achieve adequate control of hemorrhage and gastrointestinal spillage in no more than sixty to ninety minutes. These limited objectives allow far-forward surgical teams to use less operative equipment and perform several operations in relatively rapid succession. According to a 2018 study of nearly thirteen years of combat casualties, undergoing surgical stabilization at a Role 2 facility decreased the likelihood of a casualty dying by one-third compared to initial surgical stabilization at a Role 3, independent of transport time or injury severity.¹⁴ This finding indicates that damage control surgery is more effective when interventions are restrained; breadth of expertise and depth of surgical supply do



Sailors from the Navy Expeditionary Medical Unit care for a simulated casualty 1 August 2019 during a mass casualty exercise at Erbil Air Base, Iraq. (Photo by Spc. Kahlil Dash, U.S. Army)

not necessarily translate into better casualty outcomes in the first hours following injury.¹⁵ The availability of REBOA further complements damage control surgery by allowing medical teams with experience in advanced resuscitative strategies to temporarily control noncompressible torso hemorrhage in select combat casualties while a colocated surgeon completes another time-limited damage control procedure, enhancing the depth of a far-forward surgical element.¹⁶

Planning recommendation—constitution of far-forward surgical elements. Originally, the forward surgical team (FST) was designed to serve the far-forward surgical need, in close proximity to the combat. Doctrinally, the FST mission provides forward surgical capability for brigade combat teams and echelons above brigade, possess organic ground mobility assets and should be mission capable shortly after the FST's arrival at a predetermined position.¹⁷ However, the FST has more commonly been deployed in an area-support posture, often split in a nondoctrinal fashion into two ten-person teams supporting battalion- or smaller-size operational areas. Presently, split FSTs can be found at forward operating bases with a company

to company-minus maneuver element and are rarely repositioned or utilized for direct mission support.

Each branch of service has identified a need for small, more mobile surgical teams to fill the gap in medical support left by the evolution of the FST mission. In the present environment of small-unit, limited-combat operations, planning should consider the size of the at-risk population, casualty estimates, the duration of the operation, and the demands of the operational unit to determine the optimal size and type of supporting surgical element. In LSCO, the tasks of far-forward surgical assets will not change, but considerations governing their deployment will. Planning will need to calibrate a mission's operational importance and unmitigated risk. Surgical assets execute early stabilizing interventions and conduct expert far-forward triage. This expertise interdicts preventable combat mortality and allows casualties to be reclassified as lower evacuation priorities,

Table. Doctrinally Established Forward Surgical Teams across the Services and Their Compositions

Surgical team	Branch	Operating room tables	Total personnel	Surgeon	Anesthetist	Emergency medicine/intensive care unit physician	Orthopedic surgeon	Physician assistant/independent duty corpsman	Critical care nurse	Emergency medicine nurse	Practical nurse	Medic/corpsman	Surgical technician	Respiratory therapist	Administrator	Communications
Forward Resuscitative Surgical Team (FRST)*	U.S. Army	2	20	2	2	2	2		2	2	2	1	2		1	
Golden Hour Offset Surgical Team (GHOST)*	U.S. Army	2	10	2	2					2		2	2			
Expeditionary Resuscitative Surgical System (ERSS)	U.S. Navy	1	9	1	1	1		1		1	1	1	2			
Expeditionary Resuscitative Surgical Team (ERST)	U.S. Army	1	8	1	1	2	1		1	1			1			
Damage Control Surgical Team (DCST)	U.S. Navy	1	7	1	1	1		1	1	1			1			
Ground Surgical Team (GST)	U.S. Air Force	1	6	1	1	1			1				1		1	
Special Operations Surgical Team (SOST)	U.S. Air Force	1	6	1	1	1			1				1	1		
Surgical Resuscitation Team (SRT)	Joint forces	1	5	1	1	1	**1	1				**1				1

(Table by authors. *Designates a team that can be split into two equally capable teams, each with half of the operating room capacity and personnel of the full team. **Designates doctrinally established supplementary personnel/capability)

enhancing the efficiency of a restricted medevac system. The table lists characteristics of the existing austere surgical teams across the services. In small-unit operations, larger teams generally provide more depth and hold capacity, enabling them to remain on station and mission capable for more extended operations in support of larger mission forces. Smaller teams are more mobile and less logistically demanding but run a greater risk of culmination if adequate resupply and onward casualty evacuation are not reliably executed. In movement-restricted combat operations, however, any collection of casualties is at once both a tactical liability and an operational moral imperative. Far-forward hold capacity becomes less

of a consideration when the alternative is higher rates of potentially preventable combat death. In most cases, an established far-forward surgical element can be customized to accommodate the mission demands and logistical constraints of a given operation.

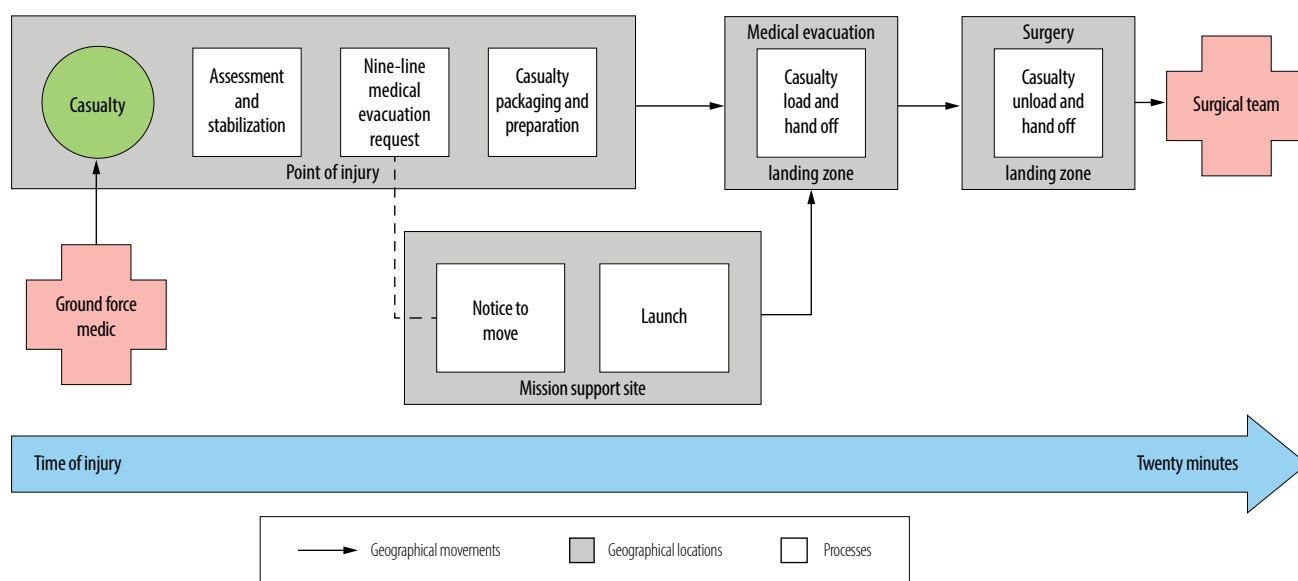
Planning recommendation—location of far-forward surgical elements. In both current small-unit and future LSCO, risk mitigation and prevention of combat mortality depends on proper positioning of far-forward surgical assets within an area of operations characterized by constantly evolving operational risk and priorities.

The optimal location of surgical team employment should be as close to the potential casualty producing

site as tactically feasible, targeting an interval from injury to surgery of no more than twenty minutes. Figure 1 illustrates the tasks and movements required from the point of injury to arrival at a surgical unit. Shortening the distance between locations will shorten the time required for the movement for a given transportation platform. Alternatively, faster evacuation platforms would also increase the likelihood of arriving at the surgical element within the goal of twenty minutes from time of injury. Training, rehearsals, planning, positioning, and resourcing should all be optimized to achieve maximum efficiency with each of these processes and movements.

preserves designated medevac platforms for continued point-of-injury evacuation by leveraging other theater assets for onward evacuation of the stabilized casualty.

Reducing the distance between the point of injury and surgical capability affords numerous medical advantages. Shorter distances typically shorten evacuation times and allow access to surgical hemorrhage control for patients who otherwise would have died before arriving at a fixed facility. Hypotension, hypothermia, and hypocoagulability are easier to prevent than they are to reverse, and reversal of these conditions is easier earlier in their course. Earlier access to blood transfusion and earlier access to surgery enable



(Figure by authors)

Figure 1. Tasks and Movements Demanded by Casualty Care and the Medical Evacuation Process between Time of Injury and Arrival at Surgery

There are two doctrinal frameworks to relate the battlefield employment of far-forward surgery. The first framework embeds the surgical team with the doctrinal Role 1. Such positioning would minimize the time from injury to surgery, provide the surgical elements with shelter and security, and add additional depth for simultaneous casualties while maintaining control of evacuation at the unit level. The second framework places the surgical team at a far-forward ambulance exchange point. Staging at an ambulance exchange point enables rapid casualty stabilization and

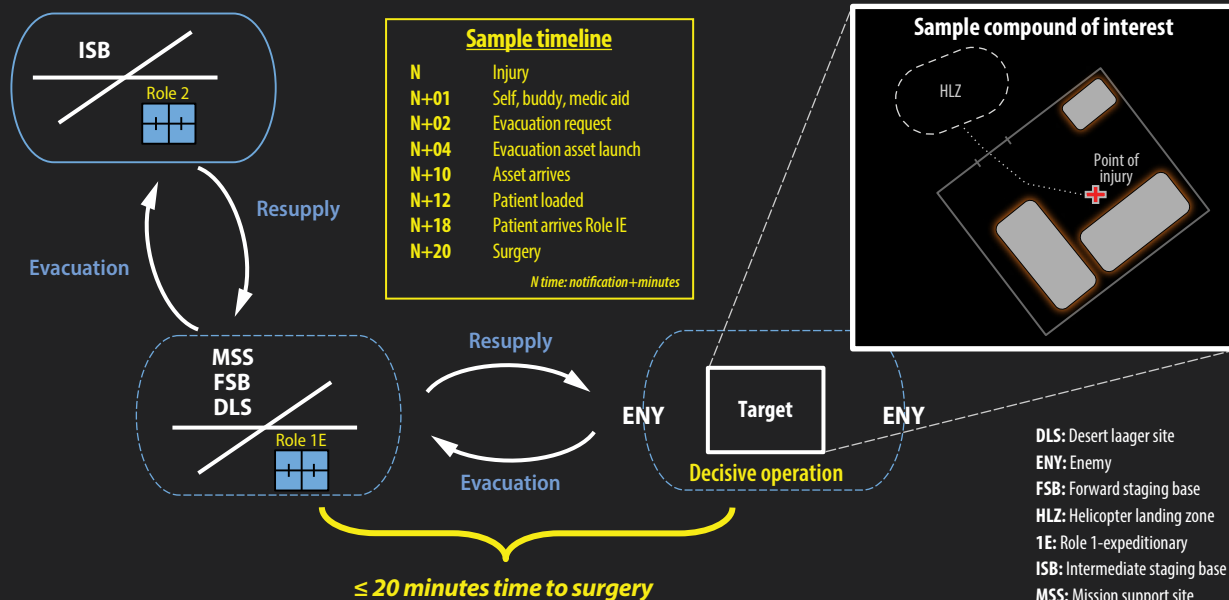
surgeons to perform procedures on patients arriving in better condition with greater physiologic reserve and resilience, improving the chance of a positive outcome while consuming less resources.

Additionally, far-forward surgical units substantially impact medical operations through their ability to enhance casualty triage. Expert casualty prioritization improves resource utilization in small-scale operations by limiting evacuations unlikely to influence patient outcomes and thereby allowing assets to continue support of ongoing operations. In LSCO, expert triage

Medical scheme: Role 1 surgical augmentation

BLUF

Commit expeditionary surgical assets to the decisive operation, forward positioning them within twenty total minutes from the target. Risk-to-force and tactical, operational, and strategic resonance will determine commanders' selections of decisive targets. In this paradigm, surgical assets will augment Role 1 medical assets, creating a Role 1 enhanced capability.



(Figure by authors)

Figure 2. A Template for Surgical Asset Employment in Deliberate Offensive Operations

combined with far-forward surgical stabilization enhances the efficiency of medical evacuation efforts in a movement-restricted environment. Combat support hospitals are characterized by breadth of available specialty care and depth of patient hold capacities, but their logistical demand limits their employment to a fixed area-support posture essential to decompression of forward medical assets but limited in its ability to interdict preventable combat mortality.

Adequate shelter should be considered an operational imperative for far-forward surgical elements. Environmental conditions should be considered when evaluating options for shelter. Hypothermia is a life-threatening consequence of combat injury, and sufficient concealment should be afforded to enable the use of light without compromising security. Potential shelters could include established outposts, tents, cleared buildings, and large mobility platforms such as CH-47, CV-22, or C-130 aircraft.

Planning recommendation—Roles 2 and 3 support of far-forward surgical elements. A far-forward

surgical element will always be constrained in the volume and duration of its capacity to hold casualties and its depth of expendable class VIII (medical supplies). By definition, damage control surgery terminates with an expedient, temporary closure of opened body cavities. It is rare for patients to require a second surgery in the first six hours following the index surgery. Definitive surgical repair of injuries and permanent closure ideally occurs six to twelve hours after the initial procedure, providing a window of time for safe evacuation. Postoperative casualties remain critically ill and will require critical care medical personnel to continue blood product resuscitation, ventilator support, and close monitoring of sedation and pain control. Tactical critical care evacuation teams and certain medevac teams possess such capability; however, their limited availability may require using surgical unit personnel for transport, though the core of the surgical team, the surgeon and anesthesiologist, should remain on station to provide continuous surgical support for ongoing tactical operations.

The resupply of a forward surgical element can be facilitated with prestaged packages of high-use items delivered through the logistical chain of the supported unit or through incoming medical evacuation platforms. At the conclusion of the operation, forward surgical teams will require access to a fixed logistical hub to reset and refit. This may require a Role 2 or 3 military treatment facility for sterilization of surgical equipment and temperature-controlled storage of blood products.

Conclusion: Death Ignores the Golden Hour

It has long been doctrine to amass forces at a battle's decisive point, though this principle has not been consistently applied to medical support planning. Surgical capability, like all other critical capabilities, should be positioned to best support the decisive point of an operation. The Golden Hour paradigm that serves as the foundation of medical planning for area support operations has successfully reduced combat-related mortality to the



It has long been doctrine to amass forces at a battle's decisive point, though this principle has not been consistently applied to medical support planning.



Theory in Practice

Figure 2 (on page 46) depicts a proven template of a surgical asset employment scenario during offensive operations. The assault force establishes a primary base of operations at an intermediate staging base, a platform used to project concentrated combat power into the battlespace. From there, multiple concurrent operations can establish forward staging bases, affording proximity and rapid operational reach to target. Commanders will mass forces at these forward nodes across all warfighting functions, posturing assets to best support their priorities. Surgical assets are repositioned for each operation in line with the planning priorities discussed, ensuring the operational risk mitigation afforded by a far-forward surgical capability remains within reach of decisive points.

This model has been tested and proven effective in operations of varying scales using both rotary-wing and ground evacuation assets. In 2017, during the Battle of Mosul and again during the seizure and clearance of Raqqa, U.S. surgical assets were placed far forward on a linear battlefield and were repeatedly repositioned to remain immediately behind the forward line of troops as this line advanced. Mobile, far-forward surgical elements have also been deliberately employed at a variety of temporary staging locations in support of the full spectrum of special operations in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

lowest levels seen in modern warfare, but data indicates that reducing the number of preventable combat deaths requires the adoption of a new standard for operational medical support, focusing on the prehospital environment and shortening the interval from injury to lifesaving, damage control surgery.

Employment of far-forward surgical teams should focus on the principles of expert triage, advanced resuscitative care and far-forward damage-control surgery, maintaining the ability to provide on-target blood transfusion, early hemostasis, and a time from injury to surgery of less than twenty minutes. Implementing this standard will reduce preventable combat mortality, providing commanders with tested, data-driven options to mitigate risk for the full spectrum of military operations.

In LSCO, it will be incumbent upon medical, evacuation, and logistics elements to position surgical assets further forward and in greater isolation than in recent theaters. Doing so maximizes medical effect proximate to the point of injury. Limitations on the positioning of larger medical elements will inhibit their ability to effect preventable combat mortality, and movement restriction in a contested environment will hinder the medical evacuation system on which an area support model relies. The battlefield medical system must modernize to maximize the further-forward surgery paradigm despite the inherent logistical challenges. Status quo, like the Golden Hour, is no longer acceptable. ■

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Divided We Fall

How the U.S. Force Is Losing Its Joint Advantage over China and Russia

Lt. Col. Dan Sukman, U.S. Army

Lt. Col. Charles Davis, PhD, U.S. Army, Retired

Professionalism and Jointness are perishable, they must be cultivated.

—Joint Chiefs of Staff White Paper

Since the implementation of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act (GNA), the U.S. military has held a particular operational advantage over potential adversaries with respect to joint interoperability. That

advantage is the ability to conduct operations that are truly joint, where forces from different services work interoperably and interdependently. However, in recent years, the U.S. military has taken steps that threaten to undermine this advantage by weakening the very reforms that have lifted the joint force. Among other things, it has diluted joint education and curtailed joint duty assignments while adversaries such as China and Russia are slowly but steadily enhancing their ability to



plan and conduct joint operations. To preserve its joint advantage, the U.S. military must reverse this trend and recommit to building military leaders who can think jointly, operate jointly, and lead jointly. Without a renewed emphasis on joint officer development, the United States stands to cede competitive space to global adversaries such as China and Russia.

The Joint Imperative

Jointness is not automatic and it is perishable. It must be advanced through continual joint force development efforts.

—Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*¹

As stated in the 2014 *Army Operating Concept*, “American military power is joint power”; it is through joint operations that the U.S. military achieves objectives set by the national command authority.² With the GNA and subsequent reforms, Congress’s aim was to strengthen the ability of the U.S. military to plan and execute joint operations. Joint operations rely on the unique capabilities of each service ranging from combat platforms, warfighting organizations, and most important, joint-minded leaders for each mission. Rarely does a crisis lend itself to the capabilities of a single military service, and this means the forces from each must collaboratively orient toward common objectives rather than each fighting a separate campaign. Through the effective conduct of joint operations, the U.S. military is able to achieve success during times of conflict, and when it operates jointly and simultaneously through all domains and around the globe, adversaries have few military options to counter our actions.

It took the United States three decades to build the joint operational-level advantage it possesses today. More than simply establishing joint commands and assigning officers from the various services into joint billets, the Department of Defense (DOD) deliberately

institutionalized key enablers for joint operations. This included developing organizations to produce joint concepts and doctrine, conducting several major joint exercises annually to hone the readiness of the joint force to carry out wartime missions, and maintaining a robust inventory of lessons learned from joint operations and exercises.³ Most important, the DOD learned the importance of instilling jointness in the minds of officers through joint professional military education (JPME) and subsequent joint duty experience. This is because JPME and joint duty are central to fostering the interpersonal trust that underwrites interdependence between forces of different services. These reforms have created a joint force of unprecedented capability, a result that our strategic competitors have recognized and are now endeavoring to achieve as well.

The Rise of China as a Joint Threat

Since assuming the office of president of the People’s Republic of China, Xi Jinping has emphasized the importance of improving joint operations in the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). Recent reforms moving the PLA toward more effective joint operations include changes to training, personnel, concept development, and organization.⁴ By drawing lessons from past U.S. military operations—Desert Storm, Kosovo, and the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003—Xi and senior PLA leaders concluded that victory in warfare is achieved through joint operations. In its 2019 annual report to Congress, the DOD outlined multiple ways in which China seeks to restructure its military to improve jointness. For example, the PLA recently published the *Outline of Training and Education* that emphasizes joint training in all domains and increased training through multiservice exercises, maneuvers, and mobility operations.⁵ Further, according to the authors of a recent National Defense University publication, China is also reorganizing its command structure through the establishment of five theater commands, each responsible for developing joint operational plans. Though domestic in nature, this bears a striking resemblance to the arrangement of the U.S. combatant commands under the Unified Command Plan.⁶

The PLA leadership understands the operational imperative of its military in a conflict with another nation is not the total destruction of an adversary’s armed forces. Rather, victory lies in the destruction of warfighting potential, ranging from strategic leadership

Previous page: Russian, Chinese, and Mongolian national flags are displayed on armored vehicles 13 September 2018 during the Vostok 2018 military exercise on Tsugol training ground in Eastern Siberia, Russia. The exercise involved nearly three hundred thousand Russian troops, a thousand aircraft, and thirty-six thousand military vehicles from Russia’s army, air force, and navy. (Photo by Sergei Grits, Associated Press)

to communications infrastructure. Attaining these goals or destroying these target sets requires the integration of long-range fires and effects *across each branch of service and across all domains*.⁷ Through such reforms to the PLA, China seeks to create a force capable of “complex joint operations.”⁸ Moreover, PLA leadership is focusing greater attention on both joint training and joint education to build the capacity of military officers to command and control joint operations.⁹

China is not yet at the threshold of surpassing the U.S. military’s capability to conduct joint operations. The United States has a deep bench in experienced and educated joint officers, not to mention joint doctrine and operational concepts, and these are capabilities that China still lacks. Further, China is moving toward an integrated joint fires system and advancing toward a joint logistics and joint acquisition enterprise.¹⁰ It is prudent for the United States to continue to monitor China’s advance toward a military capable of joint operations with the assumption the PLA will mirror current U.S. joint capability by 2035.¹¹

The Steady Russian Advance

After years of neglect and underinvestment, Russia’s advance toward a more capable and effective force began in earnest in late 2008. In the decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian military had minimal funding with which to man, train, and equip its units. Early indications of this underinvestment came to the forefront in 1994 with the feeble and haphazard performance by the Russian military in Chechnya. This circumstance persisted over the next decade and a half during operations in Kosovo in 1999 and later in the Republic of Georgia in 2008. In the latter, the Russian military was able to achieve strategic objectives, but this success was attributable more to the use of overwhelming force and capability overmatch than a more effective military force. The performance of the Russian military in Georgia prompted broad reforms to create a more capable and professional force.¹² Although the reforms included changes to professional military education, they principally aimed to improve military efficacy through restructuring of the Russian military.

By operating jointly, the Russian military stands to create unique operational advantages through its more diverse range of militarized forces. In her book *Russia’s Military Revival*, Bettina Renz details how the Russian

approach to joint military operations is not entirely analogous to the U.S. concept of jointness, which usually involves the participation of forces from two or more military services.¹³ To understand Russian joint operations, one must comprehend Russian force structure and how it starkly differs from that of U.S. military and those of many states. While the Russian military has the traditional armed forces with army, air force, and naval components, Moscow’s military efforts can also incorporate other nontraditional militarized forces such as the Federal Security Service, the Interior Ministry, and the Ministry for Emergency Situations. This arrangement follows a different paradigm and is not well understood by many in the U.S. military. Under this structure, the Russian military can directly leverage nontraditional forces and capabilities in circumstances that would require the U.S. military to be subordinated under another interagency department. For example, the Ministry for Emergency Situations, a component of the Russian military, is the lead for foreign humanitarian assistance, whereby any U.S. military involvement in the same would be under the auspices of the U.S. Agency for International Development.¹⁴ This broad range of forces enables Russia’s military to conduct joint military operations

against adversaries across a broad spectrum of activities and well below the threshold of armed conflict.

Moscow’s intervention in Syria demonstrated to the world the Russian military’s increasing capability to

Lt. Col. Daniel Sukman, U.S. Army, is a strategist and a member of the military faculty at the Joint Forces Staff College. He is a former Military Fellow at the William and Mary Project for International Peace and Security, and a member of the Military Writers Guild. Sukman earned master’s degrees from Webster University and Liberty University. He served with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), United States European Command, the Army Capabilities Integration Center, and the Joint Enabling Capabilities Command.

Lt. Col. Charles Davis, U.S. Army, retired, is an associate professor at the Joint Forces Staff College in the National Defense University. He received his PhD in international studies from Old Dominion University and has served continuously in the joint arena for almost twenty years.

conduct joint combat operations. According to the research of Tim Ripley, as discussed in his book *Operation Aleppo: Russia's War in Syria*, throughout its involvement in the Syria conflict, the Russian military integrated its land, air, and maritime forces to mass effects against forces opposing the Syrian regime. Facilitating this, Russia set up a joint command and control center ironically named "Central Command" (or "Centcom")

to provide unity of command over its forces. This facility was also a combined Russian, Iranian, and Syrian headquarters that coordinated the efforts of three armies, two air forces, and one navy.¹⁵ Russia's joint operations in Syria served as both a laboratory and a showcase for the growing ability of Russia's military to operate as a joint force. Russian forces continually operated close air support; ground maneuver; and



long-range land, air, and maritime strikes in a concerted effort to achieve operational objectives.¹⁶

Russian joint operations in Syria and the increasingly larger and complex *Zapad* (West) joint military exercises signal that Moscow's forces will not be pushovers should the United States and NATO partners decide to engage them on a battlefield in the future. However, as with the PLA, the Russian military does not currently

pose wide-ranging and significant challenges to the overmatch enjoyed by the United States. After the reforms of the last decade, the Russian military has become smaller and remains very limited in its force projection capability. However, restructuring and targeted investments are producing a force that is much more effective and ready, and this trend is expected to continue in the years ahead.¹⁷



The United States—Standing Still or Moving Backward?

PME [Professional Military Education] has stagnated, focused more on the accomplishment of mandatory credit at the expense of lethality and ingenuity. ... PME is to be used as a strategic asset to build trust and interoperability across the Joint Forces and with allied and partner forces."

—Summary of the National Defense Strategy¹⁸

Few would disagree that the reforms under the GNA and subsequent legislation have enabled the components of the U.S. joint force to operate better, gaining in both efficiency and effectiveness. However, rather than improving on these gains, in recent years, the U.S. military now appears to take jointness for granted and has worked to weaken many mechanisms that have lifted the joint force. These missteps manifest most saliently in the areas of joint education, duty, and organization.

Joint education. The DOD appears to have lost its way in ensuring military officers receive quality and timely joint education. It has largely succeeded in obfuscating the intent and focus of a critical phase of joint education by accrediting myriad senior-level organizations for delivery of JPME Phase II (JPME II). Most of these programs and institutions exist for purposes far apart from joint education, and their accreditation creates tension between serving their particular service or specialty focus and the requirements for a truly joint curriculum and experience. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's policy for joint education does little to assure consistent emphasis in joint content and approach across these programs, and despite its intended and legislated purpose, this phase of joint education is now widely misunderstood, becoming many different things to many different people.¹⁹ In short, there is absolutely no basic common core of content that institutions must cover in the JPME II curriculum. Further, a 2008 policy change no longer requires officers to receive this phase of JPME before serving in their first joint assignment, despite the preparatory intent for the education.²⁰ According to RAND, the disordering of joint education and joint duty

has now become endemic in practice.²¹ Despite explicit warning by Congress in 1989, JPME II is now seen by the Services as simply a "check the box" requirement for promotion to flag or general officer.²²

Joint duty. In another step backward, the DOD also diminished the value of joint experience to officer development. With the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act in 2017, the DOD succeeded with a legislative initiative to substantially reduce the amount of time required of officers serving in a joint assignment to receive joint duty credit. While the change helps to increase the number of joint-qualified officers on the books—a cosmetic improvement—the measure severely shortchanges the joint experience acquired by officers and saddles combatant commands with increased personnel turnover and staff inefficiency. Additionally, some services delay assignment of their officers to joint billets until after those have met their service requirements for promotion to O-6 (Army colonel or Navy captain). This adds to beliefs that joint duty matters only when it comes to promotion. In fact, it encourages officers to avoid joint service as long as they possibly can, serving instead in the assignments their service values most. Together with the changes to JPME, the DOD is taking a quantity-over-quality approach to joint officer development.

Joint organization. With respect to joint force structure, the disestablishment of Joint Forces Command in 2011 represents another unfortunate setback to the joint advantage of the U.S. military. Not only did the action eliminate a powerful advocate for jointness, but it also eliminated the operational control the joint command exercised by law over the forces assigned to it.²³ This left the preponderance of U.S. conventional military forces under the exclusive control of their respective services—a circumstance that continues today. It was the intent of Congress in 1986 that, with few exceptions, all forces shall be assigned to the unified commands in order to reduce the parochial influence the services exerted in past joint military operations. A key architect of the GNA reforms and author of *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon*, James Locher III, testified to the Senate Armed Service Committee in 2015 that this circumstance risks "returning to the service separateness that crippled military operations prior to the Goldwater-Nichols Act." Yet, in 2017, the DOD sought and succeeded in legislative change preserving the circumstance of service-retained forces.²⁴

Previous page: Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, speaks to coalition service members 27 November 2019 at Operation Inherent Resolve headquarters in Baghdad. (Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Dominique A. Pineiro, U.S. Navy)

With these events as a backdrop, it seems unlikely that the United States is on track to sustain, much less build upon, the competitive joint advantage it enjoys over potential adversaries. It is time for the DOD to pause and reflect.

Consequences

The ability of the U.S. military to employ each component of the joint force, synchronized in time, space, and purpose, is paramount to maintaining overmatch over adversaries in time of conflict. The United States has witnessed past failures by its military services to

diagnosed, if ever, there will be an instinctive resistance by the department to earnestly identify and meaningfully address the challenge, especially when other priorities abound. This is because the GNA reforms to joint education, duty, and organization, while having only modest advocacy in the joint staff, have little substantive advocacy within the powerful services. Congress had to force much-needed reforms on the DOD in 1986 and will need to do so again if the department succeeds in continuing its efforts to undermine the mechanisms that have enabled the joint force to become what it is today.

“It seems unlikely that the United States is on track to sustain, much less build upon, the competitive joint advantage it enjoys over potential adversaries.”

operate as a joint team. Operation Eagle Claw, the failed rescue of the hostages in Iran, serves as one example. Casualties in the invasion of Grenada serve as another painful reminder of the price paid when the services fail to operate jointly. So it seems illogical, if not nonsensical, that in the face of contemporary security challenges the U.S. military would diminish, rather than to preserve or expand upon, the various GNA reforms that created the finest military force in history.

While the specific consequences of the U.S. military's incremental retreat from jointness are hard to discern in advance, three outcomes are likely. The first is that negative effects on the joint force resulting from these changes, while unquantifiable, are all but certain. With increased service influence on joint operations and combatant command staffs increasingly manned by officers ill-prepared for joint duty and who will turn over more often, we should expect more ill-fated mistakes by the joint force to include deadly ones. Our not-too-distant history reminds us of this.²⁵ The second outcome is that the joint force and the DOD will be slow to recognize these problems and their underlying causes. Moreover, the operational implications of departmental efforts to weaken GNA reforms may go undiagnosed for a very long time and perhaps will come to light only after a succession of military operations beset by parochial attitudes and joint incompetence during both planning and execution. Finally, once the problem is properly

Conclusion

A thirty-year head start in building joint competency was not the choice of the U.S. military; rather, it was effected forcibly by Congress through legislation. Discerning and thoughtful members of Congress recognized the fiascos of Vietnam, the Mayaguez incident, and the deadly mistakes in Operation Urgent Fury and Eagle Claw for what they were. In response, they drove institutional change in the DOD and against the unified opposition of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The realization that the military fights as a joint force is a key part of the officer maturation process. Joint duty and education are not zero-sum options; they are not wasteful drains on service resources. The ability to put aside service parochialism to capably plan and execute as a joint team is a force multiplier for forces operating at the tactical and operational levels of war. Doing so requires quality and timely joint education, depth of joint experience, and effective joint organization before forces and functions are brought together in time of crisis. The joint advantage enjoyed by the U.S. military is highly perishable and must be cultivated continuously. If we expect to win the first battles of the next war, the department must reaffirm its commitment to improving the capability and capacity of the joint force. ■

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Army, the Joint Forces Staff College, the DOD, or the U.S. government.

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23. The White House, "Presidential Memorandum—Disestablishment of United States Joint Forces Command," press release, 6 January 2011, accessed 28 October 2019, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/06/presidential-memorandum-disestablishment-united-states-joint-forces-comm>.

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25. Problematic operations attributable in part to the inability of the different military services to work together cooperatively and coherently include Operation Eagle Claw (1980 Iran Hostage Rescue), Operation Urgent Fury (1983 Invasion of Grenada), and the Vietnam War in general.

Gap-Crossing Operations

Medieval and Modern

John D. Hosler, PhD

Linear obstacles are primary mobility concerns in modern land warfare and especially in offensive operations, whose characteristics of initiative and tempo are stymied by delays from natural or man-made obstacles. Accordingly, the U.S. Army has produced doctrinal manuals for overcoming them. These manuals have recently evolved from two separate (now obsolete) manuals for river crossings and breaching operations, Field Manual (FM) 90-13, *River Crossing Operations*, and FM 90-13-1, *Combined Arms Breaching Operations*; to a 2008 update (also now obsolete) on all types of gap crossings in FM 30-90.12, *Combined Arms Gap-Crossing*

Operations; and finally, in 2016, to Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-90.4, *Combined Arms Mobility*.¹

Doctrinal publications are not always the most exciting reads, but they do occasionally scratch itches by utilizing anecdotes in order to demonstrate continuing relevance of history. An overview of Napoleon's "Spanish

A Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicle from 4th Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, completes an uncontested wet-gap crossing 2 June 2018 in the vicinity of Chelmno, Poland. Engineers from the German Bundeswehr and the British Royal Army combined amphibious assets in order to build three ferries to facilitate the crossing of nearly two hundred military vehicles. (Photo by 1st Lt. Ellen Brabo, U.S. Army)



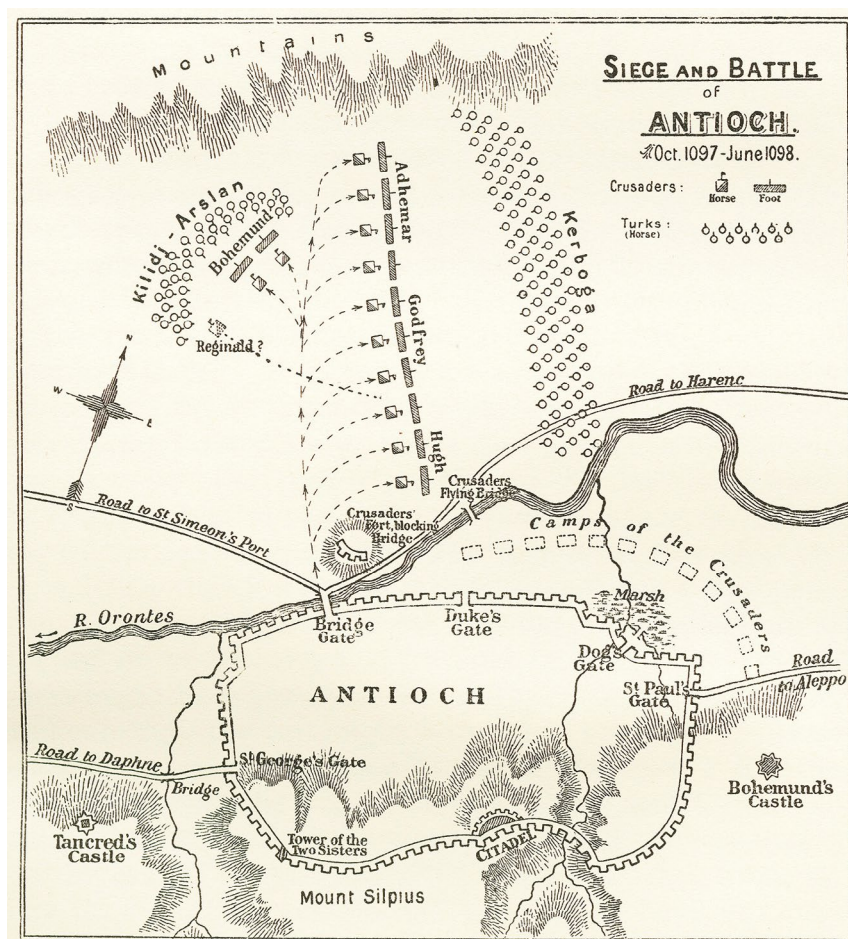
Ulcer,” for example, appeared in the original 2006 FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Moreover, the 2017 FM 3-0, *Operations*, is peppered with historical anecdotes ranging from Luzon to Desert Shield, as well as quotes from leaders stretching back thousands of years.² The gap-crossing manuals, however, contain no historical references whatsoever, which is odd because—as historians well know—armies have had to overcome linear obstacles for thousands of years.

My particular historical specialization is medieval warfare, and most of the primary military manuals from late antiquity through the Middle Ages discuss gap crossings. Flavius Vegetius Renatus, writing in Italy in either the fourth or fifth century, notes, “When crossing rivers careless armies often get into serious difficulties ... the enemy often launch rapid ambushes or raids [there].”³ Leo VI’s ninth-century *Taktika*, which is built on a tradition of Byzantine military writings carried forward from the *Strategikon* of Emperor Maurice (d. 602), includes some methods for not only crossing wide gaps such as using fortified wooden bridges but also cautions that “if a crossing is found to be difficult at any point, especially on the side where the enemy are, you should abandon that river bank.”⁴ In the fifteenth century, Christine de Pizan, drawing heavily on the authority of Vegetius, cautions against hubris when crossing via technological means:

Although such devices may seem easy when heard about, those who have not learned how to do them, who might say that such things are merely imagined, would find them difficult. It is no joking matter.⁵

Other manuals, however, skip lightly past the details and fall into this trap of underestimating the difficulty of gap crossings. For example, ‘Umar Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Awsī al-Anṣarī’s fourteenth-century treatise, *Tafrīj*

al-Kurūb fi Tadbīr al-Ḥurūb (The Dispelling of Woes in the Management of War), merely states that commanders ought to know “the positions of the fording-places and caves, of the pontoon and vaulted bridges which he



The city of Antioch in 1098 during the First Crusade. The map is oriented westward; on the edge of the city can be seen the Dog Gate and Bridge Gate, as well as the road to St. Symeon. (Photo from the Royal Armouries Museum via Alamy Stock Photo)

must cross to reach the place he chooses.”⁶ Here, we see al-Anṣarī assuming that it is the crossing site alone that deserves attention, not the crossing method.

Along with such theorists, medieval chronicles also feature a rich assortment of gap-crossing examples from which we can draw pertinent lessons. Gap-crossing tactics and the operations that engender them have remained—in function, if not form—essentially the same since the Middle Ages (with the sole exception of the modern recourse to the aerial domain) and therefore retain utility to modern warfighting. Secondly, the examples provided here also suggest weaknesses in current

doctrine, especially when maneuvering under fire. These are all from the high medieval period and are located in the Levant: the Siege of Antioch during the First Crusade (1097–1098), the Siege of Damascus during the Second Crusade (1148), the Siege of Acre during the Third Crusade (1190–1191), and the campaign to al-Mansourah during the Seventh Crusade (1249–1250). Former Combined Arms Center commander Lt. Gen. Michael Lundy recently pressed for more attention to gap crossing in the Advanced Operations Course scenario at the Command and General Staff College; this, therefore, seems an opportune time for historians to directly engage on the issue.

The Problem

ATP 3-90.4 is currently marked NOFORN (no foreign nationals), and thus cannot be quoted here, but the older FM 3-90.12 still provides useful definitions. Gaps are “linear obstacles or gaps ... natural and man-made, wet or dry” and variable in size.⁷ They are below grade and differ from above-ground complex obstacles like walls, which are not crossed but rather breached. A gap crossing is “projecting combat power across a linear obstacle.”⁸ Such operations must address a threefold problem: first, to move combat power to the near side of the gap in safety; second, to cross the gap; and third, to reform combat power on the far side. There are two broad categories of crossings: to support movement (in which the force is not taking active fire) and to maneuver (in which it is taking fire).

Unless adequately considered in preplanning, such crossing and reforming can potentially interrupt operational flow. If a unit arrives before the crossing is prepared, it is forced to halt and break formation. This reduces the tempo of the operation and invites new or further enemy attacks. The danger remains once the crossing begins because the soldiers and equipment are necessarily squeezed through a narrow aperture, which reduces maneuverability. Reforming ranks on the far side are also vulnerable to assault. Moreover, if the crossing itself takes too long, the army risks losing the initiative.⁹ Medieval armies dealt with the same processes and faced the same risks as armies today.

Antioch, 1097

In 1096, the Western armies of the First Crusade marched to Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul)

on their quest to recover the city of Jerusalem from the Seljuk Turks. Trekking past the Byzantine capital and into Asia Minor, the crusaders encountered and defeated a number of Turkish armies, most notably at Dorylaeum (modern-day Şarhöyük, Turkey) in July 1097. Later that year, in October, soldiers arrived before the massive and extensive fortifications of Antioch (modern-day Antalya, Turkey). Situated astride the Orontes River, the city was a tough nut to crack: its fortifications climbed up the heights of Mount Silpius to an elevation of about 512 meters, and the entire circuit of walls incorporated at least scores and perhaps hundreds of towers.¹⁰ The craggy terrain protected the east and northeast of the city; to the south lay a dry gap, a deep gully that rendered an approach from that direction untenable. Investment therefore had to be accomplished on the northwestern and western sides, where walls, towers, streams, and the Orontes were key obstacles; all were defended by a Turkish garrison that numbered in the range of four thousand men.

Much of the early stages of the siege concerned the eastern side of Antioch and a particular aspect of wet-gap crossings that Army doctrine calls “denial measures.” Denial measures are inherently defensive, in that they seek to prevent the enemy from crossing a gap.¹¹ Two of the city bridges enabled Turkish sallies against the besiegers: a small crossing outside the Dog Gate (near the northwest corner) and a larger one attached to the aptly named Bridge Gate (southwest corner). These bridges had to be destroyed in order to protect the crusader flank. While taking fire from Antioch’s walls, crusaders first tried destroying the bridge outside the Dog Gate with tools; when this failed, they sought to occupy it with a wooden penthouse, which the Turks immolated. At length, crusaders finally blockaded the bridge with timbers and stones, but similar measures to deny the Bridge Gate crossing were ultimately frustrated.¹²

John D. Hosler, PhD, is an associate professor of military history at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He received his PhD in history from the University of Delaware. He is the current president of *De Re Militari*—the Society for the Study of Medieval Military History—and is a trustee of the United States Commission for Military History and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

A month later, the crusaders also executed what doctrine calls a “deliberate” wet-gap crossing by building the so-called Bridge of Boats. Constructed of shallow vessels bound together with ropes and a wicker framework, the bridge allowed a crossing from the east to the west bank of the Orontes and access to the north-south road running to Saint Symeon, a port that served as the primary crusader link to seaborne resupply. The writer Albert of Aachen, who was not a witness but gained his information about events from later interviews with veterans, identifies the operational purpose to this work: because the Muslim garrison often sallied to intercept shipments coming north from Saint Symeon, the Bridge of Boats enabled the crusaders to “run hastily across this wooden bridge and help their men who were bringing food supplies from the seaport.”¹³ In other words, the gap crossing had a dual function: it enabled army mobility while simultaneously protecting lines of sustainment.

Damascus, 1148

Two generations later, in 1145, Pope Eugene III promulgated the Second Crusade in response to ‘Imād ad-Dīn Zengī’s conquest of one of the Crusader States, the county of Edessa (modern-day Urfa, Turkey). The crusade was an unmitigated disaster: the imperial contingent (led by King Conrad III of Germany) was largely destroyed at the Second Battle of Dorylaeum in October 1147, and the French contingent (under King Louis VII) met a similar fate at Mount Cadmus (near Laodicea) in January of the following year. The combined remnants ruminated and ultimately elected to attack Damascus as a secondary course of action.¹⁴

The Siege of Damascus commenced 24 July 1148. The crusaders’ initial approach to the city was on its north and northwestern side, for it was believed that the northern walls were weak, and therefore the best place to attempt a breach. However, the approach was through dense orchards studded with low garden walls and watchtowers, from which tenders could observe their plots, and the paths between them were narrow. This forced the crusaders into tight, predictable lines of advance that were ably defended by Muslim skirmishers and missile troops. It made for difficult progress.

King Baldwin III of Jerusalem’s men moved slowly forward as they tried to get to the Barada River, which flowed across the northern side of the city.¹⁵ This wet gap had to be crossed before Damascus’s walls could be

invested. Three principal sources for accounts of the Second Crusade, Odo of Deuil (a Cistercian monk and the king’s biographer), Ibn al-Athīr (a Muslim historian writing in Mosul), and Ibn al-Qalānsī (a Muslim witness living in Damascus itself), speak of significant crusader difficulties but unfortunately skip lightly over the details. A fourth source, English clerk John of Salisbury, claims an easy operation: the crusaders “who had crossed the rivers ... were checked by neither fortifications nor by armed resistance.”¹⁶ He was certainly wrong here, because the best source, the well-informed William, archbishop of Tyre, writes in detail about the attack and contradicts him.

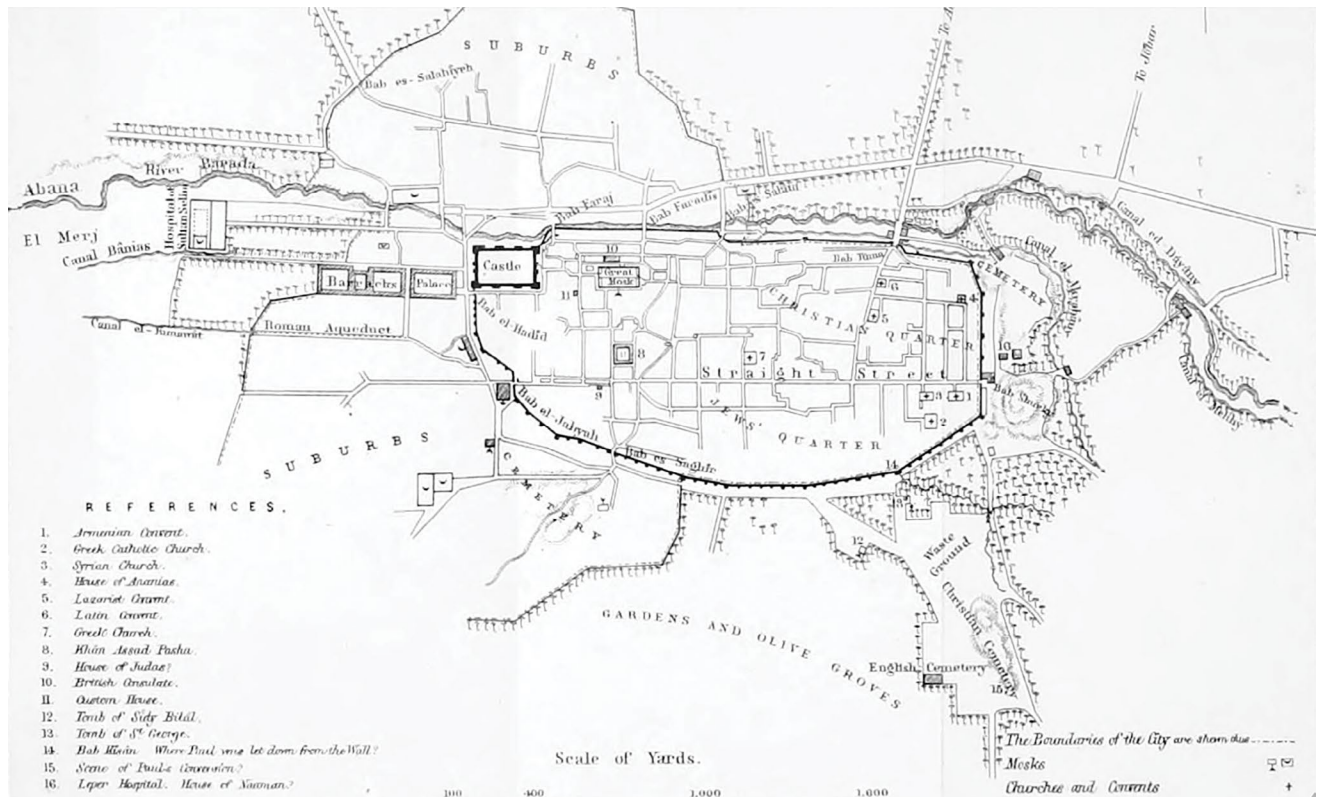
In particular, William outlines difficulties that make perfect sense in light of gap-crossing principles. First, the Muslim defenders used mounted archers and mobile frame crossbows to prevent the crusader approach to the near side of the river.¹⁷ Christian reinforcements continued to arrive, but because no crossing had yet been effected, all this combat power merely built up in a massed and vulnerable state in the “staging area” on the near side:¹⁸

Once and then again they strove to get to the water, but in vain. While the king of Jerusalem and his men struggled vainly, the Emperor, who commanded the formations in the rear, demanded to know why the army was not moving forward. He was told that the enemy had seized the river and that they were blocking the progress of our men.¹⁹

The stalemate continued until reinforcements led personally by Conrad III arrived. He ordered the knights to dismount and fight hand-to-hand, and the Muslims eventually “relinquished the river bank and fled at full speed to the city.”²⁰ This retrograde enabled the crusaders to finally cross to the far side, reform their combat power, and invest Damascus’s walls. It was, however, what the U.S. Army calls a “hasty” crossing against entrenched enemies, done in the heat of the moment and with little preplanning. And in the end it was a fruitless effort; soon after, the crusade leaders abruptly shifted their attack to Damascus’s southeastern wall, and their defeat there meant an end to the entire Second Crusade.²¹

Acre, 1190–1191

Jerusalem had been famously taken by the armies of the First Crusade in 1099 and remained in



Christian hands until 1187, a year that shook Western Christendom. The Ayyubid sultan, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin), had spent the 1170s and 1180s consolidating his power in Egypt and Syria, and in 1187, he moved on the Crusader States. On 4 July, he crushed the army of the Kingdom of Jerusalem at the Battle of Hattin, killing over ten thousand Christian soldiers and capturing their king, Guy of Lusignan. Everyone recognized that without an army to prevent it, Jerusalem's fall to Saladin was inevitable. Pope Urban III reputedly dropped dead on the spot upon learning of Hattin, so it was left to his successor, Pope Gregory VIII, to launch what became known as the Third Crusade.²² The various armies of the Third Crusade, coming from a dozen locales across Western and Eastern Europe, first converged on the Muslim-held port city of Acre in 1189.

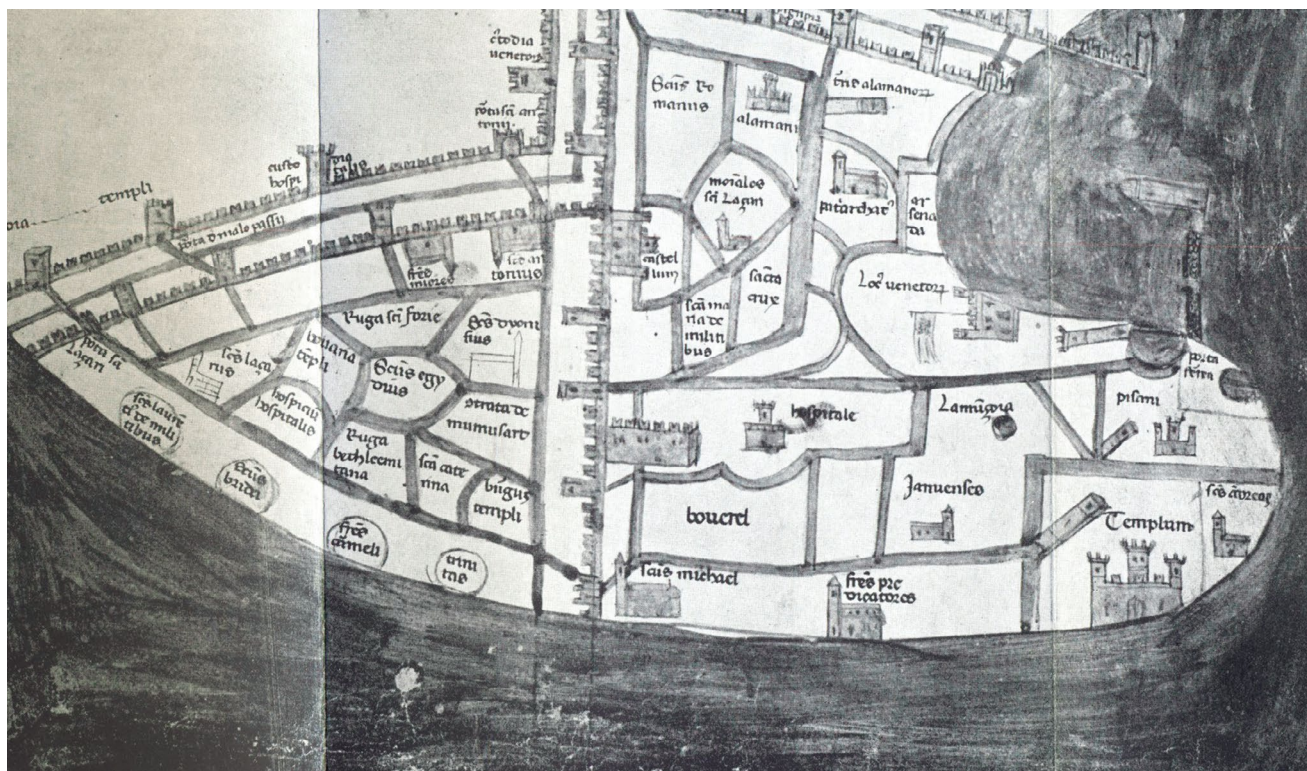
The crusaders had great difficulty taking Acre. The siege occupied their attention for nearly two years and cost them, through attrition at the walls and frequent engagements with Saladin's relief army, as many as thirty thousand casualties. Siege operations were many and diverse: blockade, direct and indirect fires, sapping, escalade, siege towers, and battering rams. The latter two, designed to either overtop the fortifications or create a breach through them, respectively,

A map of Damascus from J. L. Porter's travel book *Five Years in Damascus* (1855), which shows the flow of the Barada River on the north side of the city and part of the groves that frustrated the crusaders' approach during the Second Crusade in 1148. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

were all immolated with jars of Greek fire (an incendiary liquid) once they reached the city walls.

The key point here, however, is that the engines did indeed reach the walls, which were fronted with a dry moat, and this happened because the crusaders made gap crossing a priority. Unlike at Damascus, due attention to the need to bring combat power across the gap enabled them to attack Acre according to their own designs. In April 1190, they filled in portions of the moat with stones, to such an effective extent that they were able to push three large siege towers across it and flush against the city wall.²³ Into October, those gaps were still filled, and two rather expensive battering rams, owned respectively by Count Henry of Champagne and Archbishop Thierry of Besançon, were pushed across and struck blows against the walls before eventually being torched.²⁴

The arrival of France's King Philip II Augustus in April 1191 brought renewed efforts to fill the gap in



other sectors. Muslim writer Bahā al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād, a judge who was on-site and at Saladin's side, claims that crusaders used the bodies of their own dead people and horses to fill up the moat. The Norman poet Ambroise, another witness, offers a corresponding anecdote: a pious Christian woman who, upon being fatally struck by a crossbow bolt, asked her husband with her dying breath to put *her* body in the moat to speed the process!²⁵ For its part, the Muslim garrison in Acre sent men into the moat at nighttime for a macabre denial measure: to dismember those crusader corpses, to drag them out in carts, and to thereby restore the integrity of the gap.²⁶ In July 1191, Acre finally fell and King Richard the Lionheart of England led the remnants of the crusading armies south in a continuing (albeit unsuccessful) quest to recover Jerusalem from Saladin.

Al-Mansourah, 1249–1250

Efforts to recover Jerusalem anew were still going strong in the later thirteenth century, and the most famous of these efforts were led by the only king of France to be canonized a Catholic saint, Louis IX. Louis led two crusades, the Seventh and the Eighth, and both were disasters. On the former, he caught dysentery and was captured by the Mamluks, and on the latter, he died soon after his force landed in

The medieval city of Acre as illustrated by the artist Pietro Vesconte from *Liber secretorum fidelium crucis super Terrae Sanctae* (The book of the secrets of the faithful of the cross) by Marino Sanudo. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Tunisia. The operational elements of the king's first effort, however, deserve some attention.

In late 1249, the Seventh Crusade army of some fifteen thousand soldiers, accompanied by 240 ships, left its camp outside the Egyptian city of Damietta and marched toward Cairo. The pace was slow—they took thirty-one days to advance only fifty-four miles—partially due to headwinds stymieing the fleet but also due to a wet-gap crossing. Jean de Joinville, the seneschal of Champagne, personal friend and attendee of the king and eyewitness to most of the crusade, notes that the first deliberate crossing was in late November over a small tributary of the Nile. The army halted and dammed up the stream, then the soldiers crossed over the now-drained, shallow bed.²⁷

In January 1250, the French arrived at the juncture of the Nile and Tanis Rivers and camped on a peninsula created by the two flows. The Muslims attacked them twice but were both times driven off, taking perhaps two thousand casualties. In the

aftermath, the new Muslim commander, the vizier Fakhr al-Dīn Ibn al-Shaykh (in charge following the death of the Egyptian sultan, al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb), elected to cease his raiding and instead create a fortified camp on the easternmost length of the Tanis where it broke from the Nile, close to the town of al-Mansourah.²⁸ To properly engage and defeat the Muslims, which was necessary to move past al-Mansourah and reach Cairo, Louis had to cross the Tanis. This meant a deliberate wet-gap crossing against an extremely well-entrenched opposing army.

King Louis ordered a causeway built into its waters, a massive wooden structure filled with earth. The so-called *Rothelin* Continuator of William of Tyre, a Christian writer who was probably at al-Mansourah with the king's army, notes that the hope was to both bridge and dam the Tanis simultaneously, effecting easy access to the opposite bank.²⁹ As we often say at Command and General Staff College, however, the enemy always gets a vote; the work was complicated by the effects of coordinated Muslim direct fires, shot from sixteen artillery pieces upriver and a single, frame-mounted crossbow.³⁰ Protection and preservation of the French causeway workers became paramount. Two "Welsh cats" were built to hide them: these were movable wooden houses, in which the workers could dig and build in stages. To guard these cats, Louis ordered two wooden towers erected, from which projectiles could be directed at the Muslims upriver; to these towers were attached additional cats that housed missile troops who worked in shifts. The Arabic account of Ibn Wāṣil, who was first in Cairo and then al-Mansourah during the crusade, claims that the French also built and shot catapults against the Muslim camp.³¹

French counterbattery fire apparently had little effect, while the Muslim fires consistently struck French fortifications up and down the line: stones, sharps, antipersonnel missiles, and quantities of Greek fire slowed the engineering works, and periodic cavalry incursions from the direction of Damietta caused more problems.³² As the Greek fire set ablaze the landscape around the cats, crusaders rushed to douse them with water, only to immediately receive clouds of arrows shot by the Muslims on the opposite bank. The Muslims did not seem to have range overmatch because both sides utilized direct fires

aimed at each other's camps, but they shot with extremely high accuracy.

Moreover, the Muslims had a cunning denial measure up their sleeves: they dug trenches on the southern bank of the Tanis. Water flowed into these channels and broke away the soil, which had the effect of increasing the width of the river. It must have been a maddening sight: as the causeway advanced, the opposite shore retreated, frustrating Louis's entire effort.³³ When the incendiary shot finally immolated Louis's cats, the French tried a different tactic: a massive timber cat that could be pushed into the Tanis as a dam. It was also inflamed, and at that point Louis gave up all hope of crossing the river.³⁴

Fortuitously, soon afterward another crossing option presented itself. A local Bedouin appeared, offering to show the French a nearby ford over the Tanis—in exchange for five hundred bezants. This would be a "covert" gap crossing: undetected, Louis and several hundred knights crossed the ford on 8 February 1250. The results were not pleasant: Louis's brother Robert, the count of Artois, led first a massacre of the encamped Muslim families gathered on the far bank of the Tanis. Then, he led a foolish cavalry charge of his own men and the Knights Templar into the streets of al-Mansourah itself. Unaccompanied by infantry support, the western cavalry was quickly dispatched in the narrow city streets. Muslim cavalry, however, could now range freely and it eventually trapped and crushed Louis's main army, which led Louis to surrender and enter into captivity. Several years later (sometime after 1297), a Divine Office was read in honor of the now-Saint Louis, and its text claims that his army at al-Mansourah was reduced from "thirty-two thousand fighters to just six thousand"; clearly inflated numbers that nonetheless cement the point that constraints on maneuver can have deadly consequences.³⁵

Conclusion

It is a weakness that Army gap-crossing doctrine excludes useful historical examples. Any number of modern anecdotes could easily be incorporated to facilitate a better grasp of operational concepts and dangers (e.g., the 307th Engineering Battalion during Operation Market Garden, or perhaps Operation Peach during the 2003 Battle of the Karbala Gap).³⁶ But there is no need to limit the scope to only the last

one or two centuries. All of the medieval gap-crossing operations surveyed here in support of mobility or maneuver feature methods that are still utilized in modern doctrine and practice: swimming, fording, float and support bridges, and the use of fill material.³⁷

Importantly, medieval warfare is also peculiar because it speaks to certain problematic assumptions in the doctrine. One such assumption is the notion that a lodgment area on the far side either exists or can be created. This is not always the case, however, when dealing with a complex obstacle astride a waterway that occupies appreciable space on the far side. Marines in G Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, discovered this in 1968 while crossing the Perfume River to assault the Imperial City of Hue, Vietnam. The company took heavy fire while crossing the Nguyen Hoang Bridge, got jammed in the tight buildings fronting the city walls, and ultimately had to withdraw, just like the Western soldiers at Antioch during the First Crusade.³⁸

A second current assumption relates to this latter point: that complex obstacles will be breached either prior to or during the gap crossing, presumably with aerial assets or direct fires. According to doctrine,

Since the primary focus of planning and preparation is on the breaching operation, they [gap crossings] are typically discussed as a part of the breaching operation rather than as a separate gap-crossing operation in that context ... assault forces seize the far side objective to eliminate direct fire on the crossing sites.³⁹

In other words, the breach will be cleared before friendly forces arrive at it, which is fantastic if it can be done. But clearing the forward breach in advance cannot always be accomplished. Kristen Dahle has explained the problems experienced by the American VI Corps in January 1944 while trying to cross the Rapido River in the face of German bunkers and

pits.⁴⁰ Much like at al-Mansourah, enemy fires rained down and stymied the operation.

On the flip side, as at Acre, with proper planning a crossing-into-breaching sequence is possible. On 6 October 1973, the Egyptian army began the Yom Kippur War by crossing the Suez Canal. It crossed 220 meters of water with Soviet-made tank rafts and floating bridges but then encountered a defensive sand embankment up to twenty-five meters high with a sixty-five-degree pitch. The difference was the Egyptians had good operational planning: while engineers used British-made water pumps to cut through the sand, mobile SAM-6 launchers held off the Israeli air force's counterattack.⁴¹ In other words, they crossed a gap and *then* created a breach through a defensive barrier while taking active fire, a very medieval operation not unlike Damascus in 1148 or Acre in 1190.

Crossing and breaching remain critical in warfighting. The Army appreciates the challenge: the Center for Army Lessons Learned admitted in a 2018 bulletin that "units struggle with the synchronization of gap crossing events" and "institutional knowledge of gap crossing has atrophied."⁴² History can help officers think critically about dilemmas posed by complicated gap scenarios. And for historical anecdotes in which a far side breach or lodgment cannot be assured, the premodern period is replete with lessons because of the central role of fortifications as primary defensive measures. This seems a situation, then, in which military historians can make real contributions to improve Army movement and maneuver. ■

I would like to thank Lt. Col. William S. Nance, U.S. Army, and Maj. Christopher J. Herold, U.S. Army, who both reviewed an earlier version of this work, as well as the helpful comments of Lt. Col. William T. Nance, U.S. Air Force, retired; and Army University, which funded temporary duty travel for me to present this to peers at the International Medieval Congress at the University of Leeds on 4 July 2019.

Notes

1. For a review of doctrinal progression and studies thereof, see Kristen N. Dahle, "Gap Crossings: Not Just a Tactical Problem" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2012), 2-7.

2. Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006 [obsolete]), 4-1; FM 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2017), 4-2, 8-8.

3. N. P. Milner, trans., *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 3.7.
4. G. T. Dennis, trans., *The Taktika of Leo VI* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2014), 17.7–9.
5. Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry*, trans. S. Willard, ed. C. C. Willard (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1999), 1.17.
6. G. T. Scanlon, ed. and trans., *A Muslim Manual of War* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1961), 19.3.
7. FM 3-90.12, *Combined Arms Gap-Crossing Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008 [obsolete]).
8. *Ibid.*, 1-1.
9. *Ibid.*, 2-3.
10. John France, *Victory in the East: A Military History of the First Crusade* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 222.
11. FM 3-90.12, *Combined Arms Gap-Crossing Operations*, F-7.
12. France, *Victory in the East*, 227–28.
13. Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana: History of the Journey to Jerusalem*, ed. and trans. S. Edgington (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.42–43.
14. On the crusade in general, see Jonathan Phillips, *The Second Crusade: Extending the Frontiers of Christendom* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).
15. *Ibid.*, 220.
16. Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem: The Journey of Louis VII to the East*, ed. and trans. Virginia Gingerick Berry (New York: W. W. Norton, 1948), 118–19; D. S. Richards, trans., *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh*, 3 vols. (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 2:21–22; Francesco Gabrieli, trans., "The Second Crusade: The Siege of Damascus," in *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1957), 56–59; John of Salisbury, *The Historia Pontificalis of John of Salisbury*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall (London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1956), 56–57.
17. William of Tyre, "History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea," in *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, ed. James A. Brundage (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1962), 117; Phillips, *The Second Crusade*, 220.
18. Waiting areas are of different types: staging (zone for gathering precrossing), holding (for ordered dispersal), and call forward (final preparations prior to crossing—this is probably better served by modern history because such is typically not discussed in the medieval sources); see FM 3-90.12, *Combined Arms Gap-Crossing Operations*, 4-20.
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Utilizing Army Historians in the Operational Force

Capt. Michael Loveland, U.S. Army Reserve

Today's U.S. Army possesses a decentralized network of historians who constitute various elements of the Army Historical Program. Army historians excel at interpreting, disseminating, and teaching military history. However, the Army as a whole has not effectively integrated historians into the operational force. Most commanders and staff officers remain woefully ignorant regarding the operational role of historians. The skills and knowledge of historians can bring a wealth of capability to the operational force. Commanders and staff need to begin leveraging their expertise as part of everyday operations.

The Current Status

Historians in the operational force are categorized into three functional roles: unit historical officers (UHOs), members of military history detachments (MHDs), and command historians. UHOs are officers or noncommissioned officers, appointed at the brigade and battalion level to conduct the duties of a command historian, albeit with a more limited scope (see figure 1, page 68).¹ UHOs are typically overlooked, but they are the foundation upon which the Army field history program is built. Command historians rely on UHOs at the brigade and battalion levels to help accomplish their doctrinal responsibilities. Well-trained UHOs provide great benefits to their commanders and are also able to expand the reach and influence of both MHDs and command historians.

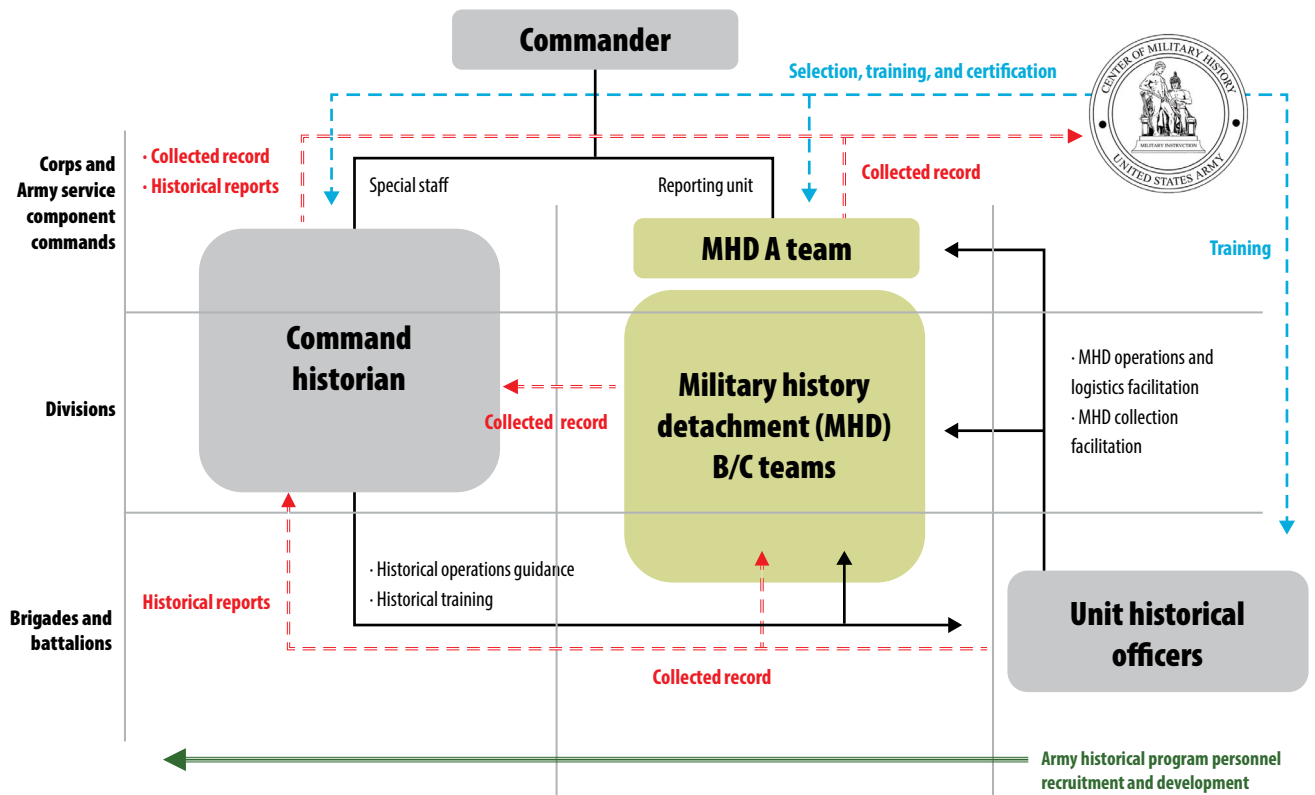
While designated as military historians, officers assigned to MHDs are more accurately defined as collection assets. They are tasked with preserving the

Army's history through the collection of operational documents, oral histories, photos, and historical artifacts. Their collection efforts provide the basis for the Army's official histories, archives, and artifact collection. MHDs are spread across all three components, with the preponderance located in the U.S. Army Reserve and the remainder in the National Guard, save for two MHDs assigned to the active component. The division of MHDs among three different components, combined with underresourcing, misuse, and a general lack of understanding of how MHDs are employed has limited their successful employment.

Command historians are doctrinally found on all staffs at the division level and above. During the course of the last seventeen years, in an effort to build more robust staffs capable of working in complex counterinsurgency environments, the Army's operational units have removed historian billets in exchange for more traditional capabilities. This is because command historians were generally viewed as not providing operational relevance to their commanders.² This sad fact has led to the Army's historians becoming largely separated from the operational force as they are relegated to three- and four-star Army commands, and several unique bastions such as the U.S. Army Center of Military History, the U.S.

Next page: Lt. Col. John Boyd (*left*), Capt. Lora Neal, and two other historians visited the 42nd Infantry Division troops in north-central Iraq in 2005 to help document the war. (Photo by Kevin Dougherty / ©2015 Stars and Stripes, All Rights Reserved)





received specialized academic training and occupies a military history position.⁵ Specialized academic training is the key qualifier for a historian. To obtain additional skill identifier 5X, a historian must have eighteen credit hours in history, military history, or a related field.















professional military education system, the training found in a graduate-level history program equips historians with advanced expertise in these skill sets.

However, the key attribute provided by historians is their status as subject-matter experts in a topic relevant

to the commander. Whether it is the history of intelligence operations, the military capabilities of China, counterinsurgency tactics in contemporary conflict, or a myriad other possible topics, advanced schooling in specific historical fields combined with the research requirements of graduate programs equip Army historians with a level of knowledge that goes far beyond the superficial familiarity typically found on an Army staff. This knowledge base is greatly needed in the operational force, where Army staff officers are characteristically in an operational billet for a period of twelve to twenty-four months and lack the time to become experts in a specific area relevant to the mission. A 2017 report by the Bipartisan Policy Center identified expanding cultural knowledge as a critical personnel system reform needed to meet the military's future missions in an increasingly complex world.⁷

During the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), U.S. soldiers' poor understanding of the local religious, political, and social structures hindered American operations, especially in the early years.⁸ A 2014 study conducted by Christopher Tebo, in which soldiers were surveyed about the topics and effectiveness of their predeployment training, found that only 6.3 percent of soldiers received instruction in the history of the nation to which they were

deployed.⁹ Soldiers and leaders could not have hoped to navigate the complex operating environments in Afghanistan and Iraq with such a poor understanding of their areas of operation. In many cases, a lack of understanding ended up creating the insurgents that U.S. soldiers fought on a daily basis.¹⁰ This lack of historical and cultural understanding at the tactical level has strategic implications for lengthening the

	1st Armored Division	
	1st Cavalry Division	
	1st Infantry Division ¹	
	2nd Infantry Division ¹	
	3rd Infantry Division	
	4th Infantry Division ¹	
	7th Infantry Division	
	10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) ¹	
	25th Infantry Division	
	82nd Airborne Division	
	101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) ¹	
	I Corps	
	III Corps ²	
	XVIII Airborne Corps	
Permanent trained historian	Assigned historian	No historian
1—Have a unit historical officer assigned as an additional duty 2—Civilian historian assigned in a temporary term limited position		

(Figure by author)

Figure 2. Current Manning of Army Historians in the Operational Force

Civilian historians hired by the Army have advanced degrees in history or related topics.

A 2017 survey of recent graduates with bachelor of arts degrees in history found that the academic skills they most used were research, writing, critical thinking, analysis, communication, and ability to consider complex contextual interactions from different points of view.⁶ While the Army trains some of these skills through the

conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, which have often been described as wars won or lost based on the decisions of our most junior leaders.

The lack of understanding goes beyond the tactical level. It can be found at the highest echelons of the Army. A 2005 study by RAND Corporation about postwar planning for the war in Iraq stated that as “wars do not end when major conflict ends.” Gen. Tommy Franks, who was responsible for planning the invasion, lacked a “holistic view” informed by previous historical examples in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Bosnia.¹¹ Historians would have been able to provide such context.

What would happen if Army units had historians as organic assets and staff members? Succinctly, the unit would now have someone who was an expert on the history, society, and culture of the projected area of operations; would understand the various ethnic, political, economic, religious, and sectarian issues that would shape the coming operation; and would also understand the tactics, equipment, and philosophy of warfare. Such detailed subject-matter expertise and advanced training in analysis and synthesis would be invaluable to commanders and

their staffs during training, planning, and ongoing operations.

Furthermore, combining the skills of professionally trained historians with specific subject-matter expertise creates professionals who are experts in causation. Historians’ ability to analyze historical precedents in which they are the experts and distill complex problems to the root cause makes them a valuable asset for the operational force.¹²

An Army unit with a historian who is an expert in an operationally relevant area would be uniquely equipped to provide meaningful

input to the staff and the commander. Historians could have helped mitigate many of the problems our soldiers and leaders have encountered during the GWOT and will continue to face in future operations.

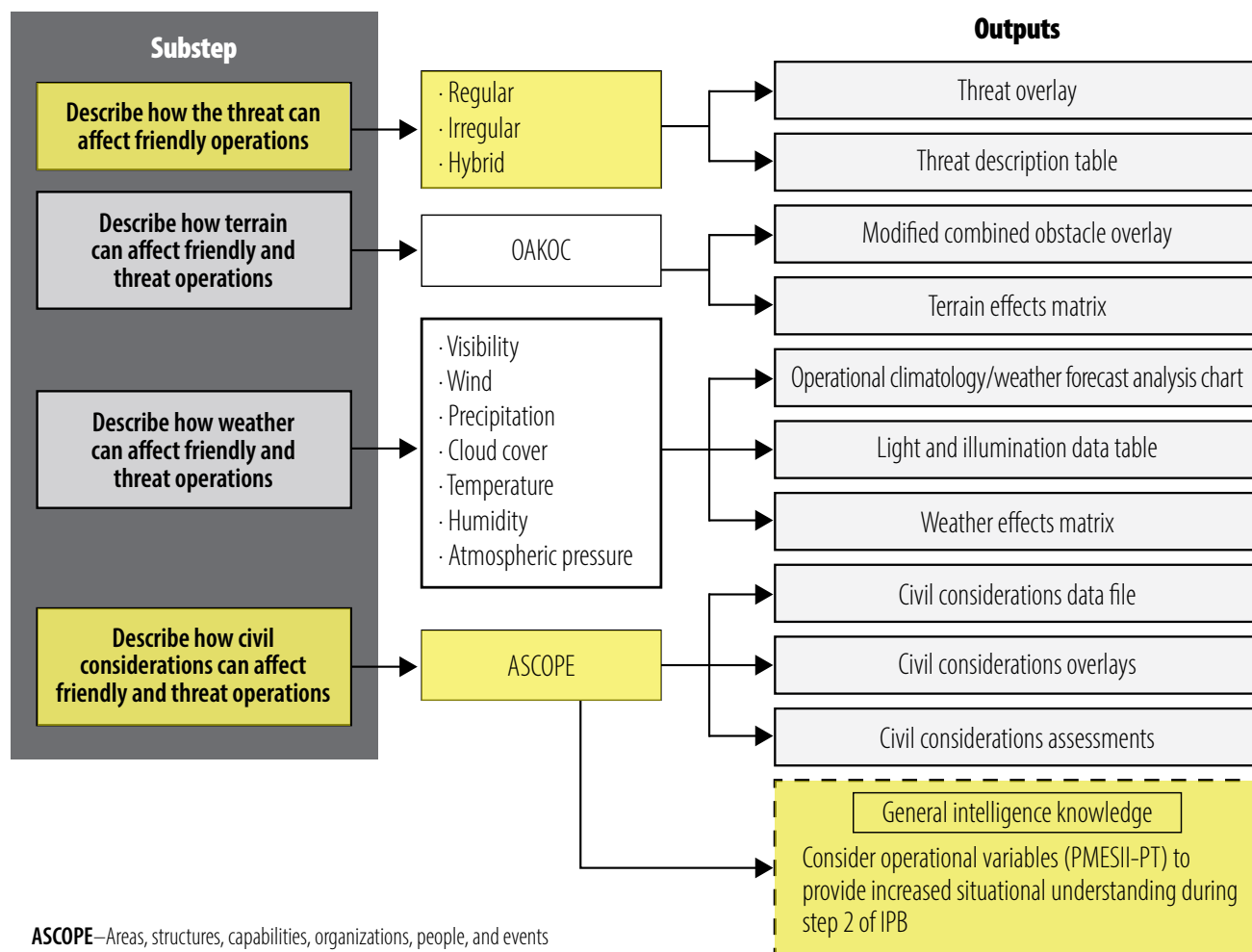
The 25th Infantry Division, one of the few operational units to retain its historian, provides a useful case study. It has benefited tremendously from the multifaceted scope of work that its civilian historian has provided. The historian, Adam Elia, has been at the division through multiple deployments, is fully integrated into the staff, and participates in the military decision-making process by providing historical context and increased understanding of the operational environment. During planning, he liaises with the division intelligence and plans cells. Thus, the division chief of staff stated that the historian has “shown himself to be value added to the command and staff” and that “having historians on staff that are motivated to make history work for the commander and the senior leaders is worth considering for units that do not already possess them.”¹³

III Corps command historian Steve Frank has also demonstrated the value historians can provide to operational units. By working with the G-3 (operations) and G-5 (plans) staffs, he has been able to inject historical precedents into upcoming training exercises to make the training more relevant, and thus more valuable. He supplemented the training plan with a series of leader professional development sessions to provide leaders with vital historical data to inform their future decision-making. He has been able to advise the commander on how to best leverage historical assets located in theater. His successful operational integration also facilitated the historical collection mission. By serving as the focal point of the Army Historical Program at the corps level, Frank has been able to ensure proper historical support and collection across the theater when deployed in support of Operation Inherent Resolve in 2017 and 2018 by providing both a centralized plan for historical operations and by advocating to the commander on behalf of the various historical elements in theater.¹⁴

Recommendations for Integrating Historians

Knowing that a historian can provide a level of subject-matter expertise that goes beyond what is now organically available to commanders, the question then becomes how the operational force can utilize Army

Capt. Michael Loveland, U.S. Army Reserve, is a military historian assigned to the U.S. Army Center of Military History, where he serves as a military history detachment instructor and observer coach/trainer. He holds a BA in history from Cornell University and an MA in museum studies from Johns Hopkins University. He has served as an infantry officer, unit historical officer, and command historian with 10th Mountain Division. In the U.S. Army Reserve, he has served as a military history detachment officer in charge. As a civilian, he works on the staff of the National Museum of the United States Army.



ASCOPE—Areas, structures, capabilities, organizations, people, and events

IPB—Intelligence preparation of the battlefield

OAKOC—Observation and fields of fire, avenues of approach, key terrain, obstacles, and cover and concealment

PMESII-PT—Political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time

(Figure courtesy of Army Techniques Publication 2-01.3, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield*, March 2019; modified by author. The highlighted portions indicate areas in which historians can be key contributors on an Army staff)

Figure 3. Substeps and Outputs of Step 2 of the Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield Process

historians. The following recommendations provide a starting point for integrating historians into the Army's operational force in a more comprehensive way.

Assist with intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB). IPB is the “systematic, continuous process of analyzing the threat and environment in a specific geographic area.”¹⁵ The historian, an expert in the area in which the unit intends to operate, is uniquely poised to provide valuable input that goes beyond what an intelligence officer is trained to provide. The

historian has the largest potential impact in the first two steps of IPB: define the operational environment and describe environmental effects on operations (see figure 3). Army Techniques Publication 2-01.3, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield*, specifically states that “understanding friendly and threat forces is not enough; other factors, such as culture, languages, tribal affiliations, and operational mission variables, can be equally important.”¹⁶ These are typically categorized as operational variables and are utilized



during the second step of IPB. These variables are areas, structures, capabilities, organizations, people, events (ASCOPE), and political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time (PMESII-PT). While an intelligence staff within a tactical unit may have knowledge of these factors through self-study, the historian is the only staff member who has comprehensive formal training in these operational variables.

During the last seventeen years of the GWOT, U.S. operational forces have been consistently hindered in their counterinsurgency operations due to their inability to break existing paradigms that are based on their faulty understanding of the operational environment, thereby exacerbating the conflict.¹⁷ The enemies of the United States are products of different cultures and societies, and one must understand the framework within which their decisions are made to understand their decision-making rationale.¹⁸

Framing. Many of the skills outlined above revolve around the idea of framing; that is, “the act of building mental models to help individuals understand situations.”¹⁹ This becomes important when executing

Staff Sgt. Amy King, a historian with the 161st Military History Detachment, Headquarters, U.S. Army Europe, conducts an oral history interview with Capt. Francisco Barrera of Headquarters, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment, 11 July 2019 during their deployment to support Atlantic Resolve at Drawsko Pomorskie Training Area, Poland. (Photo by Capt. Bryant Wine, Georgia National Guard)

the Army design methodology, the Army’s process for framing an ill-structured problem. The GWOT has been a series of ill-structured problems that the Army is seemingly unequipped to solve. The military decision-making process and the Army’s troop leading procedures are planning methodologies for structured problems, which are typically found in linear systems (which typically have known variables and properties). For example, in a company-level raid, the commander can account for the variables and properties through the mission-planning variables: mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops, and time available and civilian considerations. While there may be specific unknowns, the general capabilities (properties) in such a system are well-established for each of the variables.

Nonlinear systems are those that are far more complex. Actions made in such a system can create effects not easily anticipated since identifying relationships between variables is difficult and properties are not known values.²⁰ These systems can be analyzed and synthesized to an extent by those with a deeper understanding of the variables. A historian who is an expert on the operational variables can begin to understand the relationship dynamics in the nonlinear systems in which the Army operates. This makes them uniquely suited to frame the problem when conducting the Army design methodology for ill-structured problems. This becomes increasingly important at higher headquarters, which are responsible for managing more complex problems at the operational and strategic level. These problems tend to be less structured than those at the tactical level. Army strategists in functional area 59, some of the most common users of the Army design methodology, often have backgrounds in history for this reason.²¹

Red Team officer. Red Team officers are utilized during planning to serve as the enemy commanders and thereby identify likely enemy courses of action (COAs) and alternative plans. If there is more than one COA in development, another officer may be appointed to serve as the Red Team officer for each subsequent COA. Historians are uniquely qualified to serve as Red Team officers in military formations. With formal training in the enemy's capabilities and historical utilization, they can offer unique insight into the enemy's expected response. The historian already has many of the desired skill sets outlined in Field Manual 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations*, such as a broad understanding of the enemy environment and the enemy's perspective, an ability to anticipate cultural perceptions of all potential groups within the area of operations and the area of influence, and the capability to conduct a critical review and analysis of the proposed plan based on historical precedents.²²

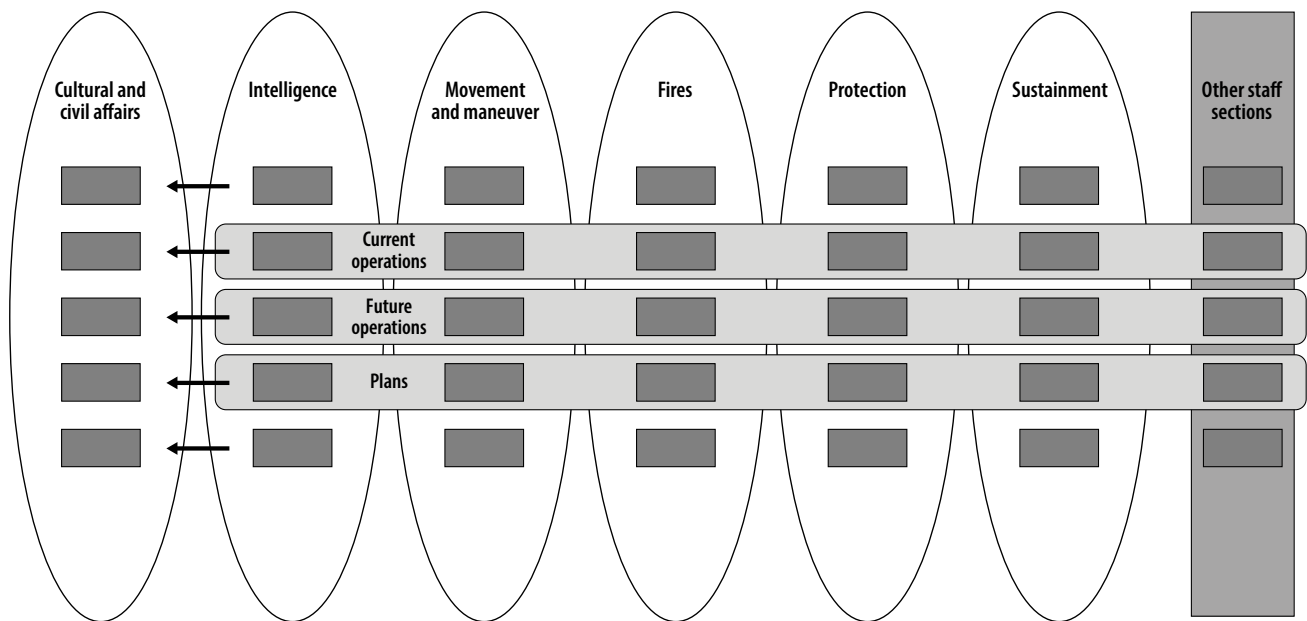
Regional alignment. At the close of 2012, the Army issued an execution order to initiate the formation of regionally aligned forces (RAF). RAF units are assigned to combatant commands and train in support of the commands' regional missions.²³ This specific training makes them the combatant commander's "first sourcing solution."²⁴ A historian on the staff of a RAF unit, who is an expert in the history of the area in which the RAF unit is aligned, would be a critical asset. That person could

facilitate the development of "culturally sensitive forces" based on a greater understanding of the partner nation's culture, military, and the security problems, which both are mutually attempting to solve.²⁵ Since many of the security problems that are addressed are also complex and ill-defined, the historian can also be leveraged to assist with the security cooperation operational planning between the RAF unit and its partner.

More importantly, a historian would provide a level of expertise in the operational environment that could be decisive. The RAF mission is predicated on understanding the culture, geography, military, and history of the country in which the unit is operating.²⁶ Army historians in the operational force should be assigned to RAFs in accordance with their field of study and a unit's respective mission. This would build "cultural expertise" and enhance the Army's ability to operate in the complex operational environment that permeates current and projected operations.²⁷

Training scenario development. When a unit attends a rotation at one of the Army's combat training centers, it is immersed into scenarios that stress each of the operational variables encompassed by PMESII-PT and ASCOPE. These elements are usually integrated into the scenario that sets the conditions for the rotation. A typical scenario involves the destabilization of the Atropian government by insurgents, who receive support from the bordering Ariana.²⁸ (These countries are generally accepted to be the equivalents of real-world countries, and the operational variables in the scenario are thus developed.) A command historian would allow units to develop their own relevant training scenarios specific to their upcoming missions. The historian would be able to develop a complete training scenario based on his or her knowledge of the projected operating environment, from the strategic context down to the tactics and techniques employed at the lowest levels by the opposing force. This would provide far more meaningful training than repetitively fighting the Ariannians, which may or may not actually be based on the unit's projected mission in its ready year. Frank, the III Corps' command historian, is currently piloting this role.²⁹

Preparing historical studies. This contribution exists in current Army doctrine, but since it is inconsistently implemented, it is worth reiterating. Army doctrine directs Army historians to support the commander with historical perspective through well-researched



(Figure courtesy of Field Manual 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations*, 5 May 2014; modified by author)

Figure 4. Modified Command Post Organization

studies.³⁰ The Mosul Study Group's report, *What the Battle for Mosul Teaches the Force*, is a recent example of comprehensive examination. Less comprehensive products may take the form of information papers or command briefings. Several historians contributed to creating this report by collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant information into a timely product that has been disseminated to commanders for use in planning future operations.³¹ This is not a new practice. Its effectiveness has been documented since at least World War II. Maj. Gen. Ralph Smith, commander of the 27th Infantry Division from 1942 to 1944, wrote to the assistant chief of staff at the time to commend the work of the now famous Col. S. L. A. Marshall. Smith was impressed with the timely operational data that was being collected that he and his staff could utilize for improving performance in future operations.³² This function is now largely performed by MHDs. All commanders should have this organic capability to receive timely historical analysis and integrate it into their planning process. Historians should track current trends in the area of operations and tie them back to historical trends. These historical studies should be the key output of the working historian's running estimate,

which continually assists the commander in decision-making per Army doctrine.

Managing a Historical Program

To successfully leverage the specialized skill sets of historians, both commanders and the Army Historical Program must change how they manage historians. Rather than continuing ad hoc methods, there should be deliberate selection, integration, and development of historians.

The first step is to reinvigorate the unit historical officer program. Providing dedicated and trained UHOs at the battalion and brigade level will set the foundation for providing Army commanders with historians as a standard staff asset. Commanders should begin appointing UHOs as provided in AR 870-5 and ensuring they are qualified through a UHO mobile training team provided by the U.S. Army Center of Military History, or by attending the Command and General Staff College's A625 Army Field Unit Historian (resident) or Field and Unit Historian Course (distance learning). These course instructors have begun working together to revise the curriculum for UHOs and to schedule mobile training teams for deploying units.

The operational force should also request MHDs during training to build the habitual relationships and utility that will be necessary in the operational environment. Recent collective training exercises have demonstrated how MHDs can provide a real-time collection and feedback mechanism to commanders and staff about what is actually occurring in their area of operations, from the junior-enlisted level to the highest level of command. This information can then be integrated into decision-making, future planning, and refinement of tactics, techniques, and procedures. MHDs will also help build the unit's historical record and the historical record of the area of operations that will be necessary for follow-on forces to operate successfully.

Commanders at the division level and above should work to reestablish billets for command historians on their staff. Short a permanent position, hiring a term civilian employee or selecting an officer with an additional skill identifier 5X for a broadening assignment would allow the commander to begin leveraging the capabilities of historians.

This organizational concept would also enable a unit's command historian to serve as the proponent and lead for all Army Historical Program elements including UHOs and MHDs within their respective command. Placing the command historian as the commander's lead for all historical elements will make those elements more effective and also make the historian a more effective asset for the commander and his or her staff. This organizational construct will allow the command historian to facilitate organized collecting and also provide historical support to commanders at all levels by drawing upon a wide network of current information and historical expertise from across the command via MHDs and UHOs.

Once present, the historian should be integrated into standard staff functions and be expected to produce as would any other staff officer. One way to do this would be to create a functional cell at division headquarters and above, focusing on cultural and civil affairs that advises the commander predominantly on the impact of the operational variables (see figure 4, page 74).

The RAND report on the postwar planning in Iraq states that if the Army will continue to operate in foreign cultural environments, it must do so in a way that does not undermine the mission.³³ A functional cell such as this could actually enhance

the Army's ability to carry out its mission rather than merely attempting to avoid the development of additional problems. This cell would consist of the command historian, the foreign area officer, and the G-9 (civil affairs officer). The command historian would be able to facilitate integration of information both vertically and horizontally from across the Army Historical Program. This would give the commander, through the cultural and civil affairs cell, access to a holistic analysis of the operational variables similar to what is already available through the functional operations, intelligence, and logistics cells with regard to traditional mission variables.

Conclusion

The Army Historical Program is at a turning point. Emphasis on building readiness is driving change across the Army. The time is ripe to increase the participation of historians in the operational force. Army historians can do more than collect and preserve the Army's operational records. They can provide critical capabilities that have been missing from the operational force structure and truly enhance readiness and mission accomplishment.

This work has already begun. UHO and MHD training and integration is being revised and pushed aggressively across the operational force. The recently established Army Futures Command has a command historian position on its tables of distribution and allowances after a temporary historian demonstrated clear added value. Three MHDs were deployed simultaneously to three different theaters for the first time in 2018, supporting Operation Inherent Resolve, Operation Atlantic Resolve, and U.S. Forces Korea. The year also saw the integration of four MHDs from all three components into a corps-level warfighter exercise.

Work remains, though. Commanders and staffs must work to select, train, and utilize UHOs and command historians. They should allow the development of a meaningful Command History program. MHDs must be integrated into exercises and operations to provide the baseline collection necessary to enable UHOs and command historians to succeed. Historians must be expected to contribute to mission accomplishment.

This treatise is not meant to establish a formal plan of action for changing the role of historians in

the operational Army. It is meant to spark a discourse on how to increase the operational utility of the Army historian and begin shifting the perception of historians as ancillary parts of the staff to that of vital members, ones who can provide meaningful contributions both in training and in war.

Fundamentally, it proposes a shift of the operational Army historian mindset. Rather than focusing solely on the institutional history of the Army, Army historians in the operational force should be contributing to the Army's core mission—to fight and win our nation's wars. ■

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Fighters of Hashed Al-Shaabi (popular mobilization units) flash the victory gesture as they advance through the town of Tal Afar, west of Mosul, 26 August 2017 after the Iraqi government announced the launch of the operation to retake the town from Islamic State control. Hashed Al-Shaabi is a composite organization mainly composed of Shia Islamic militias that is underwritten by the government of Iraq but heavily influenced by Iran. (Photo by Ahmad Al-Rubaye, Agence France-Presse)

“Trans-Rational”

Iran’s Transnational Strategy for Dominance and Why It Cannot Survive Great Power Competition

Maj. Scott J. Harr, U.S. Army

*Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation,
and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.*
—Gospel according to Matthew

As the United States seemingly scales back its counterterrorism operations—primarily in Middle Eastern theaters—and shifts to focus on nation-state competition, one of the enduring lessons from its experiences over the last nineteen years relates to the limits of American power with the emergence of capable transnational actors. Far from being uniquely American, these lessons reflect a shift in the concept of sovereignty as it applies to all nation-states existing in the current Westphalian paradigm that ranks the nation-state as the most powerful political entity. Modern global trends lie at the heart of these lessons. While shrinking the metaphorical distance between people groups and cultures across the globe, the convergence of technology and globalization has empowered entities that transcend established national boundaries and enables them to project power and influence far beyond their physical sizes and geographic locations. In a state-centric global world order, these transnational, nonstate actors take many forms including corporations, nongovernment organizations, social movements, and terrorist groups. These inject the world order with an unprecedented level of complexity, which tends to confound the international status quo. The result is an international community teeming with transnational groups, creating transnational issues, opportunities, and threats. Reactions to the rise of transnational threats have been varied with some, like author Anna Simons, calling for a reinvigoration of nation-state sovereignty even as nonstate actors assert themselves on the international stage.¹ Others, like Maryann Cusimano Love, see a reduced role for traditional concepts of nation-state sovereignty in an increasingly interconnected and shared global community.²

The emergence of transnational organizations is enough in its own right to strain the state-centric world order. However, nation-state adversaries of the United States increase the danger posed by transnational organizations by harnessing their ambiguous attributes to shape and prosecute competitive actions that undermine U.S. interests. While U.S. adversaries identified in the 2018 *National Defense Strategy* have exploited and incorporated transnational groups in their efforts to make policy gains

on the margins of peace (bypassing American strengths in the process), Iran is perhaps most adept at influencing and plying transnational groups to work against U.S. and allied regional interests. Iran is well-versed in shaping movements toward its own ends, having deployed this tactic to assume power in 1979, hijacking legitimate social and antigovernment movements to install the current theocratic regime. Building on this successful experience, modern Iran trains, supports, and employs a vast network of nonstate, transnational proxies to advance its foreign policy agenda across the Middle East.

Given the above dynamics, it is clear that Iran has evolved the use of transnational groups in proxy warfare from a strategy traditionally employed to balance power, forestall direct nation-state confrontation, and decrease risk into a power-projection strategy designed to defeat regional and international adversaries without a build-up or investment in traditional military capabilities. An analysis of some of the latent (and perhaps unforeseen) challenges of the Iranian approach that elevate transnational groups to such a prominent power-projection role in a state-centric world order will lead to conclusions about the prospects of Iran's strategy in a global environment dominated by great-power competition between nation-states and will offer constructive and pragmatic recommendations regarding the best course that U.S. policy and actions should take to defeat hostile Iranian actions.

The Transnational Transformation

The concept of nation-states employing transnational forces as proxies is neither a new phenomenon nor a novel tactic in warfare. Mechanically, proxy warfare is relatively straightforward in terms of its components. A state sponsor typically provides some form of support to a benefactor (often a transnational group) in order to lower its risk in indirectly achieving its objectives by way of the benefactor's actions that service mutual interests. While this form of proxy warfare is not new, *how* Iran employs it to achieve its policy objectives is new and represents a significant pivot and transformation from historical applications of the concept.

In the bipolar world order that emerged after World War II in which the United States was pitted against the Soviet Union in the Cold War, both nations routinely sought indirect confrontation through the use of transnational proxy forces that often transformed the improbable landscapes of third-world

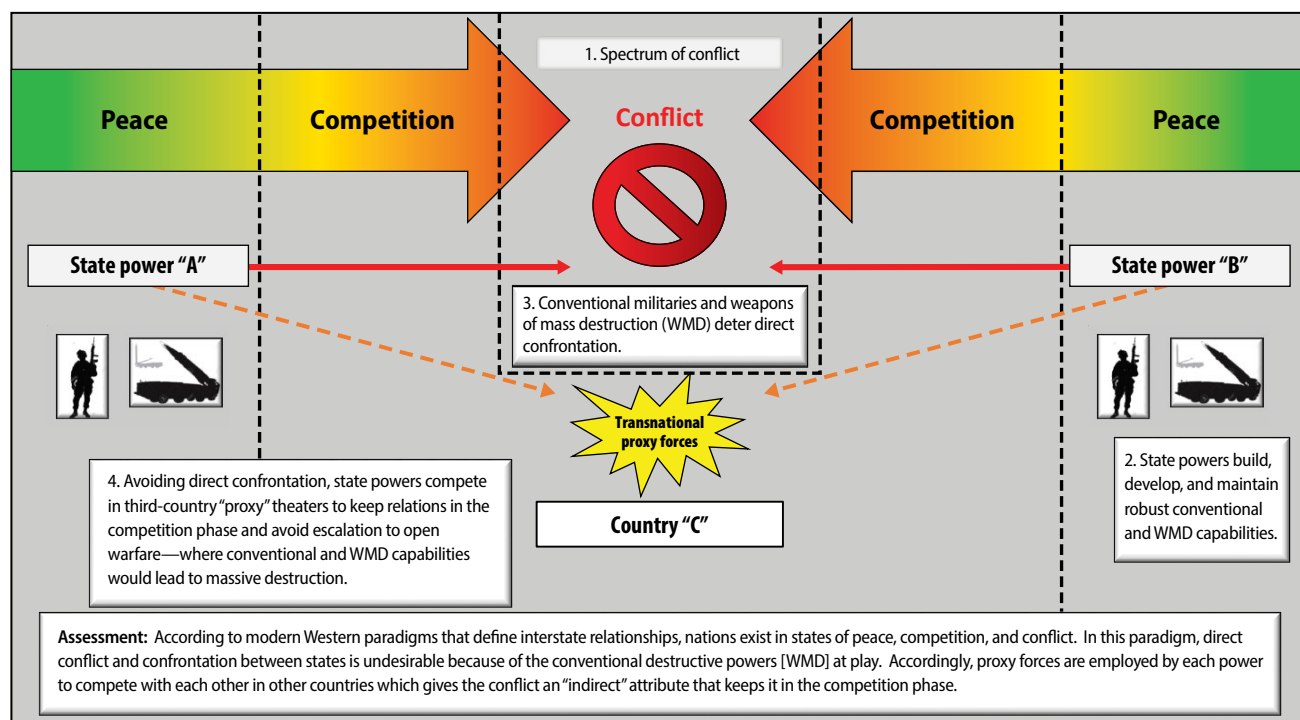
countries (e.g., Angola, Vietnam, and Afghanistan, to name a few) into venues for great power competition using locally aligned, transnational forces.³ Despite the preference and popularity of proxy warfare empowering transnational groups during the Cold War period, its use during this time period represents a *tactic* in warfare—not an overarching or primary strategy to protect and to ensure the respective national global interests at stake. That is, even as the United States and Russia employed proxies across the globe, they simultaneously developed robust conventional military capabilities as their primary means of deterring adversary actions and defending their national interests. Tellingly, “deterrence theory” (reflecting the mass destructive concerns of employing conventional military capabilities) dominated strategic theory of this time.⁴ Such strategy, by default, relegated proxy warfare to a subset tactic (even if popularly used) designed to forestall high-stakes direct confrontation between nations.

In its development and use of transnational proxy forces across the Middle East, Iran has elevated proxy warfare from a popular tactic to the centerpiece of its military strategy working to achieve its foreign policy objectives. The conquest and destruction of Israel remains the foremost policy objective of the theocratic Iranian regime since its rise to power by way of the Iranian Revolution in 1979.⁵ Because of the power imbalance between the two adversaries that bestows conventional advantages to Israel as a bona fide nuclear power, Iran has created, developed, and nurtured transnational proxy groups across the Middle East as its primary and strategic means to threaten and counteract Israeli advantages in the conventional and nuclear domains. From Hezbollah in Lebanon to the Shia militia groups in Iraq and Syria, and the Houthis in Yemen, Iran’s investment in transnational proxies supersedes any of its other military activities aimed at projecting power. This is evident in observing how Iran prioritizes and arrays its military forces across the Middle East. According to recent figures, in addition to its robust special forces charged with conducting asymmetric proxy warfare, Iran has begun deploying its conventional security forces (Artesh) abroad to advise, train, and assist its transnational proxy forces in record and unprecedented numbers.⁶ Additionally, Iran’s asymmetric forces (the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Quds Force) receive the lion’s

share of national funding and resources compared to conventional forces.⁷ By essentially retasking its conventional forces to focus on supporting its transnational efforts and by giving the forces charged with conducting asymmetric warfare the bulk of its national funding, Iran has signaled that it is strategically focused on transnational proxy warfare, perhaps at the expense of its conventional military forces. Given the historical and recent success Iran has had using its proxies to successfully confront Israel via Hezbollah, infiltrating the Iraqi government to subvert U.S. interests, using the Houthis to drive the Yemeni government from power, and ensuring the survivability of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, it’s not hard to understand Iran’s preference for proxy warfare.

To further demonstrate how Iran’s use of transnational proxies diverges from historical applications, it is useful to first introduce and discuss current paradigms of interstate relationships that have informed and shaped national strategy documents and emerging military operating concepts. The foremost paradigm that frames current U.S. strategic military dialogue articulates interstate relationships along a spectrum of warfare ranging from conditions of peace and competition to conflict.⁸ In the most desirable phase, nations enjoy peaceful relations defined by the absence of conflict and a general desire to cooperate to achieve mutual interests. As interstate interests begin to diverge, relations enter a phase of conflict that is marked by competition (sometimes fierce) to achieve or secure

Maj. Scott J. Harr, U.S. Army, is a Special Forces officer serving in United States Special Operations Command. He holds a BS in Arabic language studies from the U.S. Military Academy and an MAPP in Middle East affairs from Liberty University, and he is a recent graduate of the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Holding current defense language ratings in eight U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) regional languages and dialects, he has served multiple tours in Afghanistan and locations throughout the USCENTCOM area of responsibility as an infantry platoon leader and Special Forces detachment commander. He most recently deployed as an operations officer supporting special operations forces for Operation Inherent Resolve.



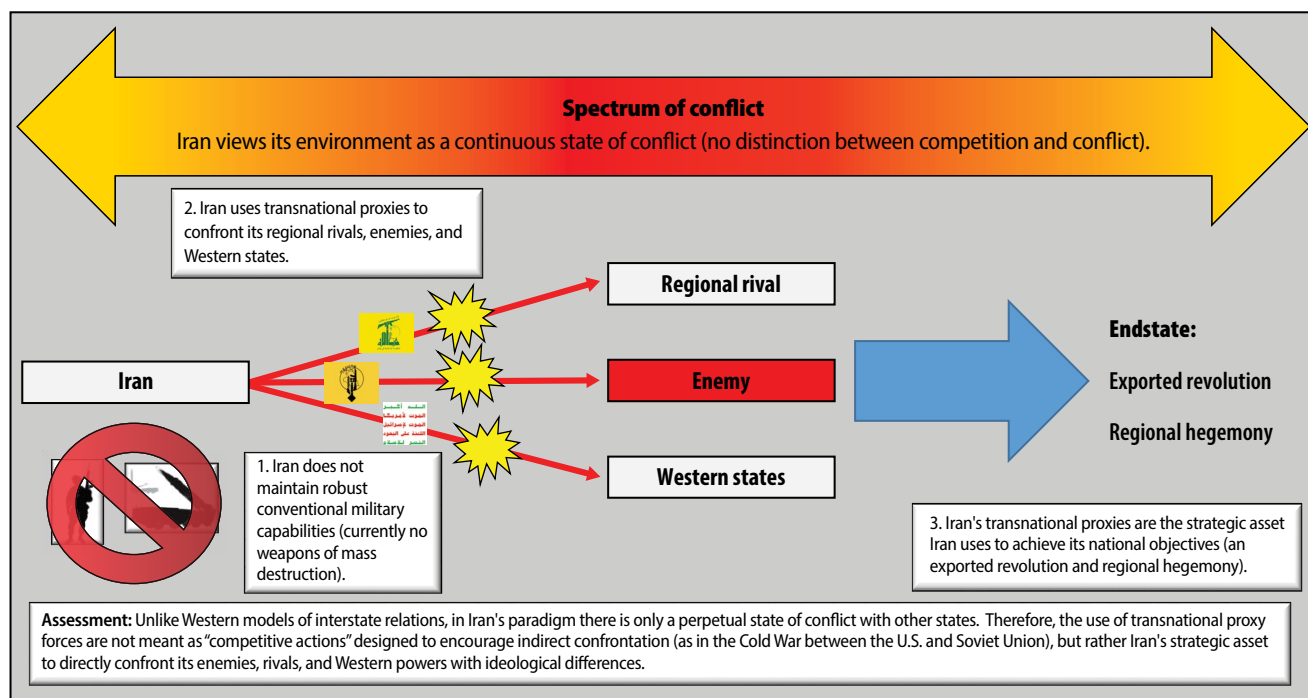
(Figure by author)

Figure 1. Transnational Proxy Warfare According to the U.S. Paradigm

divergent interests. While there may be considerable tension between the competing nation-states in this phase, their respective competitive actions generally endeavor to keep confrontation beneath thresholds of open warfare. In modern parlance, this environment is often termed "the gray zone," referring to competition that is neither entirely peaceful nor overtly hostile.⁹ Beyond the competition phase is open and declared conflict. In this phase, states are openly at war with one another and employ the full range of military options to achieve or win their objectives at the expense of another state.

Using the above paradigm (peace, competition, and conflict) as a lens through which to characterize interstate relationships helps distinguish the traditional role of transnational proxy warfare from Iran's current and modern applications. While the great nation-state powers of the Cold War used transnational proxy warfare as a tactic to balance power and forestall confrontation, Iran uses transnational proxies as a strategic means to win its objectives outright. This Iranian dynamic, elevating transnational proxies from a tactical method to a strategic imperative, reflects the disparity between U.S. and Iranian paradigms that define

interstate relations. Whereas the United States makes a distinction between conditions and relationships of peace and competition prior to open and declared conflict, Iran makes no such distinctions and views itself as a nation-state in perpetual conflict with both its regional and international community. The current Iranian ayatollah, Ali Khamenei, voiced this perspective when he infamously declared that he was a "revolutionary, not a diplomat" when commenting on his strategy for Iranian interstate relations.¹⁰ In other words, Iran seeks conflict and not engagement as its default norm when pursuing its foreign policy agenda exporting its revolution abroad. Iranian support to transnational proxies, therefore, is not a "competitive action" (as perhaps viewed by U.S. strategists and policy makers); rather, it is the preeminent and strategic means by which Iran projects power in its perceived state of continuous conflict. This difference in perspective, in which one side (United States) perceives a "competitive" relationship (see figure 1) and one side (Iran) perceives a state of conflict, brings to mind the old adage that cautions the combatant who brings the proverbial knife to a gunfight (see figure 2, page 81). That is, as the United States



(Figure by author)

Figure 2. Transnational Proxy Warfare According to the Iranian Paradigm

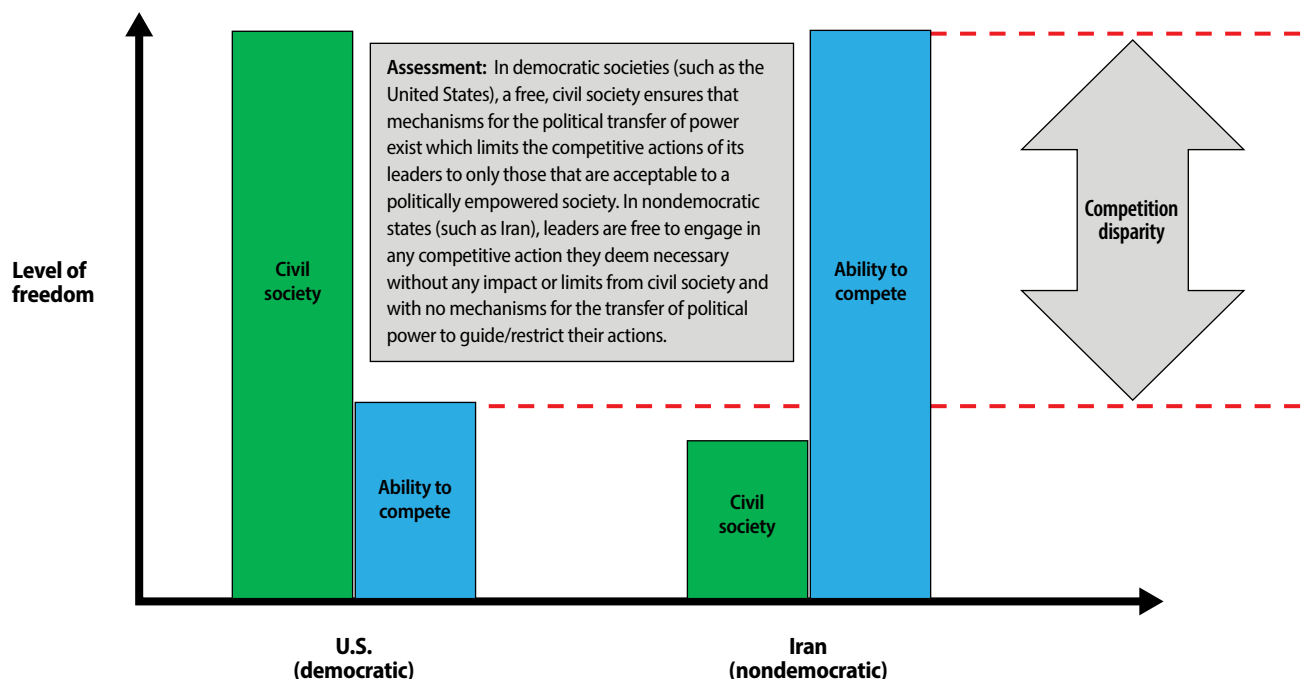
articulates a national strategy aimed at “expanding the competition” with adversaries in a competition phase, Iran’s strategy seeks to defeat its adversaries in open conflict.¹¹ However, even as Iran’s transnational strategy has yielded success (with the apparent opening of northern and southern avenues of approach from Iran into Israel) in a counterterrorism-dominated environment, empowering transnational actors in a state-centric world order featuring great power competition is not without its challenges, dangers, and tensions.

“Trans-Rational”: Why Iran’s Transnational Strategy Will Not Survive Nation-State Competition

Even as the rise of transnational actors has undoubtedly altered the role and expression of national sovereignty in the state-centric world order, a national strategy designed to project power by empowering transnational actors inherently induces tension and contradictions that potentially limit its effectiveness. Simply put, nation-state power devoted to empowering nonstate actors undermines the very system that allows nation-states to project power in the first place. More

specifically, as a regional national power, Iran’s strategy of employing transnational groups weakens the very means by which it projects power in the region. Iran is a strong regional power in the Middle East with a resilient regime that concentrates national power by controlling all elements of its civil society. Paradoxically, the Iranian regime’s tight control of social and civil freedoms gives it more capacity to compete and project power than democratic states (with more social and civil freedom) because the Iranian regime can take unconstrained actions largely unconcerned about the desires of a domestic voting constituency. Democratic states, on the other hand, are constrained in their actions by a popular voting constituency that limits state actions despite a greater degree of civil freedom (see figure 3, page 82). Despite this concentration of national power, empowering transnational groups weakens the national power base on which Iran depends. Besides normalizing the practice of empowering antigovernment transnational groups to an internal population that appears to be growing more and more dissatisfied with international isolation and economic hardship brought about by the regime, this dynamic implies, at best, diminishing returns for the state

The competition paradox: the more free a state's civil society, the less free that state is to compete in "gray zone" conflict.



(Figure by author)

Figure 3. The Competition Paradox

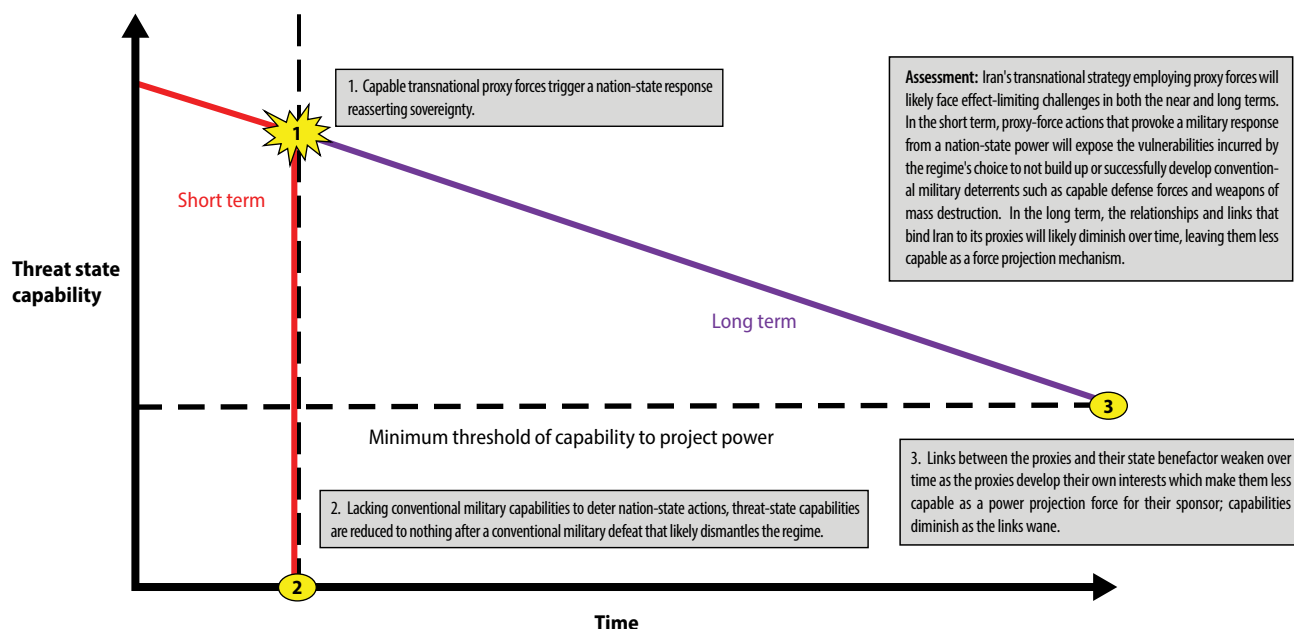
practitioner, or at worst, unsustainability when confronted with a great-power adversary.¹²

In the short term, Iranian transnational groups run the risk of provoking great powers like the United States to take actions reasserting its sovereignty against Iranian transnational threats conducted by proxies on its behalf (see figure 4, page 83). By putting all of its eggs in the transnational basket while forsaking the development of conventional and national defense capabilities, Iran remains unprepared to conventionally respond to the large-scale military actions of great-power states seeking to reestablish the preeminence of nation-state power as a reaction against transnational proxies.

In the long-term, the links between Iran and its proxies are likely to diminish over time as transnational groups develop their own interests and capabilities that diverge from or do not require Iranian support. Recent studies on the historical effectiveness of proxy warfare conducted during, and at the behest of, President Barack Obama's administration support

this dynamic. The analysis noted that the vast majority of proxy war interventions in the Cold War failed because Soviet and U.S. sponsors could not control or dictate the interests of their benefactor groups over time.¹³ Iran's relationship with Hezbollah seems to support this trend as some recent studies have suggested and argued that Hezbollah is better characterized as a legitimate Lebanese political actor instead of the compliant Iranian proxy from the 1980s.¹⁴

The sum of the above makes Iran's transnational strategy "trans-rational"—that is, a strategy that exceeds the limits of rationality, and despite its success in a counterterrorism environment, will likely not succeed in an environment featuring great-power competition. Either Iran's transnational groups will trigger a great-power response for which Iran will not have a defense, or its transnational proxy ties will diminish over time and leave it without reliable and less capable groups to project power. It also seems possible that the Iranian model of empowering nonstate actors may ultimately end up encouraging domestic groups to rise up and challenge



(Figure by author)

Figure 4. The Diminishing Returns of Transnational Proxy Warfare

the regime, which would perfectly illustrate the irony, tensions, and contradictions of dedicating nation-state power to employ transnational actors.

Iran's transnational strategy also suggests actions that the United States must take to ensure and maintain critical advantages over this adversary. First, denying Iran the ability to obtain and use weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is the most important action that ensures Iran remains vulnerable with its transnational strategy. Currently, Iran seems incapable of defending itself against a great-power conventional military threat as it relies on external proxies as a force projection strategy while paying less attention to force protection of the home front. WMD would change that equation and give Iran a credible and powerful response to great powers seeking to intervene and dislodge a hostile regime for transnational proxy threats that violate national sovereignty. Second, if willing to play a more long-term game outlasting the hostile policies of Iran, the United States should seek to accelerate the weakening of links between Iran and its proxy groups. While this is admittedly more easily said than done (given the strong ideological and cultural

ties that tend to initially bind Iranian proxies to their sponsor), even so, precedent and blueprints exist that suggest appropriate actions. Hezbollah, once again, serves as a striking example. When integrated into the Lebanese government formally in 1992, Hezbollah refused to disarm, citing its necessity as the only competent "protector" against foreign aggression.¹⁵ However, U.S. commitment and investment in the Lebanese Armed Forces over the past two decades has helped improve the capabilities of its armed forces to such an extent as to weaken or nullify Hezbollah's argument of proclaiming its right to exist based on its status as the best Lebanese national defense force. Efforts that reduce the perceived need for proxy forces to exist will help weaken their links to and dependency on Iran. Helping to create more representative governments in Yemen and Iraq (to reduce the justification of Houthi and Shia transnational groups' respective struggles in both countries) while continuing to improve the security and opportunity for prosperity in Lebanon and Syria (weakening Hezbollah's need to exist) are prudent, albeit long-term, investments and actions that will break Iran's transnational strategy.

Conclusion: A House Divided

As the United States rapidly shifts its strategic focus from counterterrorism to great-power competition, much of the analysis and assessment has been rightly turned inward to self-assess the nation's readiness and vulnerabilities in the new strategic environment. These introspective analyses should be accompanied by a review of adversarial strategies in the new and emerging operational environment. Even as transnational groups confuse and potentially alter the world order, the nation-state is not going away any time soon as the most powerful international political actor. Therefore, in a global environment featuring nation-state competition, a strategy that relies on empowering nonstate actors cannot succeed. As a well-known passage from the Bible reminds us, a house divided against itself cannot

stand. Iran cannot triumph in a nation-state-centric world order by empowering nonstate actors. Its transnational strategy will either induce reassertions of nation-state power that it cannot withstand or its supported transnational actors develop independent and diverging goals and objectives over time. Additionally, as a powerful nation-state, the United States should not recoil or flinch in the face of a shifting global environment that features transnational groups. Reasserting national sovereignty by denying the spread and threats of WMD from hostile regimes while working to short-circuit the justification for hostile transnational groups are the prudent actions that must be taken unilaterally and lethally, if required, to exploit the weaknesses in Iran's transnational strategy and preserve American interests and way of life in the new global environment. ■

Notes

Epigraph. *Matthew* 12:25 (King James).

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People flee from gunfire and grenade blasts 21 September 2013 during a terrorist attack at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya. (Photo by Jonathan Kalan, Associated Press)

Tweeting Terror Live

Al-Shabaab's Use of Twitter during the Westgate Attack and Implications for Counterterrorism Communications

Victoria Fassrainer

Wrapped in black scarves and with assault rifles in hand, four gunmen stalked the halls of Nairobi's Westgate Mall the morning of 21 September 2013. "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. We've come to kill you Christians and Kenyans for what you are doing in

Somalia," shouted one of the attackers from the rooftop.¹ For the next eight hours, the gunmen of a Somali militant group, al-Shabaab, diligently tossed grenades and shot bullets at frenzied shopkeepers and fleeing customers. By the time Kenyan security forces finally arrived, the terrorist group had murdered sixty-seven people and wounded 175

more. Yet it was not until al-Shabaab took responsibility through an associated Twitter account, tweeting, “The Mujahideen [holy warriors] entered Westgate mall today at around noon and they are still inside the mall, fighting the Kenyan kuffar [infidels] inside their own turf,” that the Kenyan government and the international community grasped that a terrorist attack was in progress at the shopping center, and the mainstream media used the tweets to report on the issue.² Al-Shabaab’s press office proceeded to create and disseminate Twitter content justifying the attack, generating fictional threats, and providing its version of news throughout the days of panic. This was the first time a terrorist group claimed responsibility for an attack using Twitter and microblogged the coverage in real time throughout the entirety of the assault.

Crises and violent attacks today exist in a hyperconnected environment in which the role of information has shifted from subsequently explaining an action to using the information as an action in itself.³ It follows that the weaponization of social networks as information hubs is a preferred tool amongst terrorist organi-

zations operating in today’s battlespace, with roughly 90 percent of organized terrorism on the internet carried out through social media.⁴ Twitter, in particular, allows terrorist groups to succinctly disseminate messaging and enables international communications before, during, and after attacks. Terrorist organizations simultaneously harness tendencies in mainstream media—which signal a growing sacrifice of validation and in-depth analysis for the sake of real-time coverage—to methodically exploit such shortcomings for propaganda and recruitment purposes. An offshoot of this

trend is that it sometimes induces mainstream media to use terrorist tweets as legitimate news sources in cases where mainstream media is sparse.⁵ Terrorist organizations that choose to cover their attacks in real time in the digital space thus pose a distinct challenge to policy makers, mainstream media, and the general public today.

This article will analyze the motivations for and use of live-tweets during a terrorist attack. The employment of live-tweets offers terrorist groups the opportunity to adopt the role of a media outlet to exploit the advantages of live coverage typically exercised by mainstream media. This poses a unique challenge to policy makers and international media in the crafting of counterterrorist strategic communications throughout a terrorist attack.

The article will first review existent literature on social networks in crisis situations and then on al-Shabaab’s use of social media to paint the scholarly environment in which live-tweeting terror—as a method and research subject—unfolds. Subsequently, it will offer a theoretical framework to analyze a terrorist group’s motivations to microblog an attack in real time, positing a hybrid of Jürgen Habermas’s theory of the structural transformation of the public sphere, Patrick O’Heffernan’s mutual exploitation model of media influence in U.S. foreign policy, and Eytan Gilboa’s real-time news coverage model. As the first instance of a terrorist group’s use of Twitter to claim responsibility for and cover an attack in real time, al-Shabaab’s assault on Nairobi’s Westgate Mall in 2013 will serve as the case study upon which the theoretical framework will be tested. To conclude, the article will summarize main findings, draw implications posed by live-tweeting attacks in the development of counterterrorist communications strategies with potential responses thereto, and finally, point to future research directions on the topic.

Literature Review

Researchers have taken a number of approaches to understanding how social networks function in crisis situations. While network scientists have relied on social network analysis, social scientists have employed survey- and content-analysis methodology. Christine Ogan and Onur Varol combine content analysis with the automated techniques of network analysis to determine the roles played by those using Twitter to communicate during the Turkish Gezi Park uprising.⁶

Victoria Fassrainer is an international affairs specialist whose work focuses on political communications and discourse. She is largely focused on Latin America, where she has developed a range of communications projects and other engagements for diplomatic representations and international organizations. Her book, *Narrating Autocracy: Political Discourse in Latin America*, explores narratives of legitimization in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia during the Pink Tide. Fassrainer received a bachelor’s degree in history from Columbia University in New York and a master’s degree in international affairs from the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna.

Moreover, literature on emergency and crisis management underscores that communication is key in allowing the public to remain informed and in shaping its understanding of crises. June Park, Hong Choi, and Sung-Min Park signal that issues of propaganda and misinformation are especially acute in crises and present particular challenges to crisis communications groups.⁷ John Sorensen and Barbara Sorensen have found that individuals depend on social media today for important information during times of crisis.⁸ Moreover, Jay Bernhardt et al. argue that the information may be used to keep crisis management groups abreast of response strategies.⁹ Joanna Dunlap and Patrick Lowenthal highlight that during times of crises, however, social media can also act as a facilitator of panic caused by the exchange of misinformation amongst users.¹⁰ The rapid exchange of (mis)information among social media users and the potential for its propagation by mainstream media and policy makers contribute to fear and misunderstanding about terrorist attacks and facilitate the potential exploitation of said fears by terrorist groups.

Existent literature on al-Shabaab's use of social media is relatively sparse. Stewart Bertram and Keith Ellison note that the group was especially active on Twitter in comparison to other African terrorist groups, underscoring al-Shabaab's use of official and semiofficial accounts.¹¹ Lindsay Pearlman conducted a content analysis of an associated Twitter account, which revealed that the terrorist group used Twitter to target a global audience, generate narratives in the form of news updates and information, and create and distribute propaganda.¹² David Mair, upon whose research this article is based, also uses content analysis to determine how al-Shabaab interacted with Twitter followers during the Westgate attack of 2013; he concludes that the group was primarily concerned with controlling the narrative of the attack and retaining an audience.



HSM Press Office
@HSM_PR



Follow

Here are 2 of the Mujahideen inside
#Westgate mall, unruffled and strolling
around the mall in such sangfroid manner
pic.twitter.com/bMG87AQOon

Reply Retweet Favorite More



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6h

You could have avoided all this and lived your lives with relative safety. Remove your forces from our country and peace will come
#Westgate

Expand

Reply Retweet Favorite More



HSM Press Office @HSM_PR

6h

You can put on a brave face but you're shaken. Your spirit is on the wane & your leaders lack the moral fibre to do the right thing
#Westgate

Expand



HSM Press Office @HSM_PR

6h

Kenyans, look how fear has gripped your nation. You do not even have the freedom to send a simple SMS to your friends and family
#Westgate

Expand

A screenshot compilation taken from the al-Shabaab Twitter page (@HSM_PR). The tweets were posted by al-Shabaab during the Westgate Mall terrorist attacks 21–24 September 2013 in Nairobi, Kenya. (Photo courtesy of TECH PRESIDENT, <http://techpresident.com/news/wegov/24366/western-voices-al-shabaab-twitter>)



Theoretical Framework

This section offers a theoretical framework that blends the work of Jürgen Habermas, Patrick O’Heffernan, and Eytan Gilboa in order to analyze a terrorist group’s motivation to cover an attack through social media in real time.

The public space. Although it is clear that terrorist groups engage with social media to disseminate their ideologies, the benefits of creating and dominating their own public sphere are less evident in the context of attacks. Prime political theories of German sociologist-philosopher Habermas are thus presented in this section to explain a terrorist group’s creation of its own public sphere in which it then, arguably, appropriates the role of a media outlet through live microblogging.

Habermas’s theory on the structural transformation of the public sphere delineates the structure of the public sphere and its evolution from the Middle Ages, arguing that it checks the illegitimate use of state power.¹³ He traces medieval Europe’s representative publicity, in which kings constituted the embodiment of the country and the public self—in other words, the private and public spheres were

Kenyan soldiers take cover 23 September 2013 after heavy gunfire near Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya. Kenyan Defence troops laid siege to the mall after al-Shabaab militants entered on 21 September and began shooting, throwing grenades, and taking hostages. (Photo by Carl De Souza, Agence France-Presse)

inseparable—to the emergence of a segment of society that saw the degeneration of the state-society synthesis, a depersonalized body of people, and the congruent development of a separate public sphere able to check the power of the state through public opinion. Habermas further argues that the transformation of the public sphere’s political function from the “journalism of private men of letters to the public consumer services of the mass media” serves as another check on state power through its influence on public opinion.¹⁴

The section on al-Shabaab’s attack on Westgate will apply Habermas’s theory on the structural transformation of the public sphere to explain a terrorist group’s creation of a public space in which it appropriates the role of a media outlet through live microblogging.

The mutual exploitation of the media and policy makers. This section posits O’Heffernan’s mutual exploitation model of media influence in U.S. foreign policy. It builds upon a terrorist group’s adoption of the role of the press within its self-created public sphere to elucidate the power of such appropriation.¹⁵

O’Heffernan argues that the government and the media incorporate each other into their own existence, “sometimes for mutual benefit, sometimes for mutual injury, often both at the same time.”¹⁶ They exist in a state of interdependent mutual exploita-

- exclude diplomats and experts who have traditionally gathered information and recommended actions to policy makers back home;
- facilitate diplomatic manipulations, worldwide propaganda, and misinformation from the broadcast of deficient reports encouraged by pools of questionable sources outside the normal and regular channels;
- create high expectations for instant results in both warfare and diplomacy; and
- make instant judgments in an ongoing battle for “insight scoops.”¹⁹



The majority of tweets reveals that al-Shabaab’s objectives aimed to further their ideology, justify the attacks, and provide news updates.



tion driven by self-interest; the model sees a dynamic of two “desegregated, aggressive ecosystems constantly bargaining over a series of ‘wants’ while they manipulate both the structure and output of the other for their own advantage.”¹⁷ Today, policy makers and the media operate more so from the same set of perceptions and images—and in some cases, even facts. O’Heffernan further argues that the media exploits the vacuum of policy about live reporting, specifically, to its advantage.

The section on al-Shabaab’s attack on Westgate will adapt O’Heffernan’s mutual exploitation model to explain the power of a terrorist group’s appropriation of such a role.

Constraints of real-time coverage. This section posits Gilboa’s real-time news coverage model to explain the strategic advantages of live coverage that may induce a terrorist group to live-tweet during an attack.

Gilboa’s study on television news and U.S. foreign policy argues that real-time television coverage imposes significant effects on the process of U.S. foreign policy development.¹⁸ Against the backdrop of high-speed broadcasting and transmission information, the media-foreign policy relationship exists in terms of constraints that

- impose snap decisions that may force hurried responses based on intuition rather than on careful extensive policy deliberation;

Gilboa further relates the constraints of live coverage to crisis situations in which “the effect of the faster pace of diplomatic exchanges on the decision-making process is particularly acute.”²⁰ He argues that “the gap between the promise of media events and the actual results often create[s] dangerous confusion and disappointments” to which the global war against terrorism represents a new major expectation challenge to policy makers.²¹

The section on al-Shabaab’s attack on Westgate will apply Gilboa’s real-time news coverage model to explain the strategic advantages of live coverage that may induce a terrorist group to live-tweet during an attack.

Case Study: Al-Shabaab’s Attack on Westgate Mall in 2013

As the first instance of a terrorist group’s use of Twitter to claim responsibility for and cover an attack in real time, al-Shabaab’s assault on Nairobi’s Westgate Mall in 2013 will serve as the case study upon which the hybrid theoretical framework based on Habermas, Gilboa, and O’Heffernan will be tested.

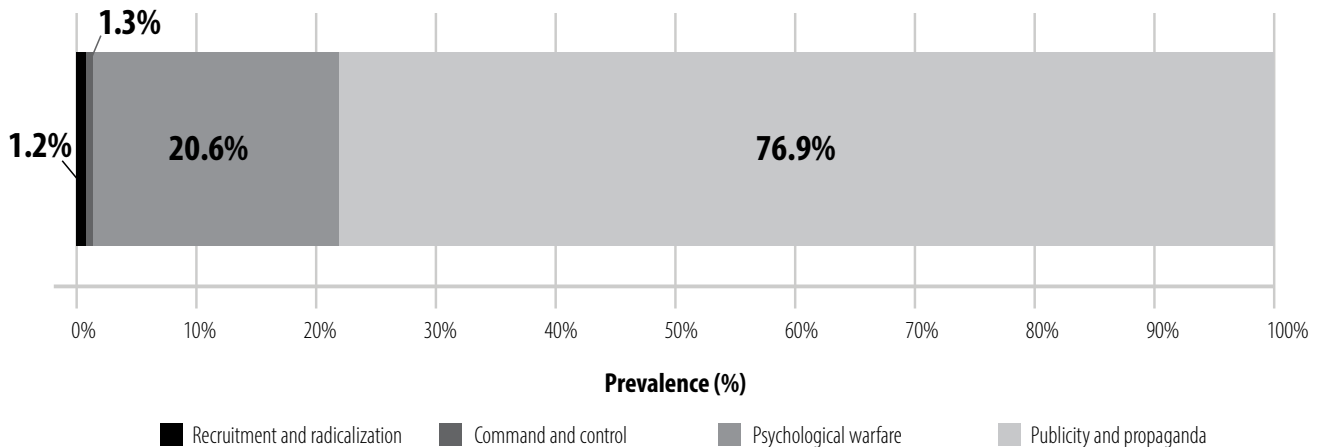
A brief note on militant Islam in Somalia will set the attack in context. Radical Islam in Somalia fortified in 2006 when the Islamic Courts Union—a grassroots movement—took control of the country.²² After a U.S.-supported invasion by neighboring Ethiopia that same year, the Islamic Courts Union

broke down and gave way to Islamic nationalist insurgency, embodied by *Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen* (al-Shabaab), who fought Ethiopians and the African Union. The conflict intensified in 2011 when Kenya sent troops into Somalia to unilaterally establish a buffer zone between the two countries after kidnappings were linked to al-Shabaab. The action only

Findings

The findings are summarized below in further detail, followed by an application of the previous section's theoretical framework.

Composition. The findings reveal that a vast majority of tweets did not link to external websites, as typically employed by terrorist groups. Only eight of 556 tweets



(Figure by author; data from David Mair, “#Westgate: A Case Study: How al-Shabaab Used Twitter during an Ongoing Attack”)

Figure 1. Tweet Content and Function

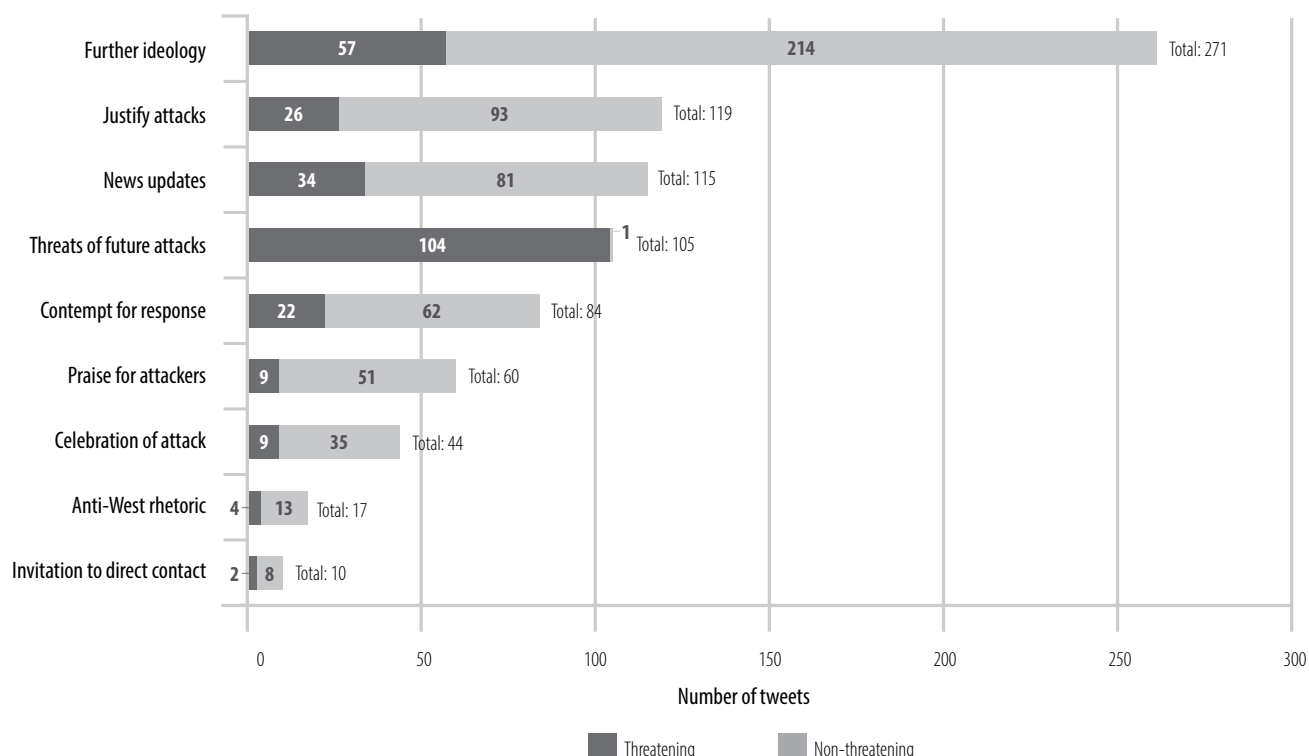
encouraged the terrorist group's growth in numbers and its swell of ambition.

In his analysis “#Westgate al-Shabaab Used Twitter During an Ongoing Attack,” David Mair investigates the real-time use of Twitter by al-Shabaab during the attack on Westgate.²³ Mair analyzes 556 tweets amongst various accounts associated with al-Shabaab to understand the motivation for using Twitter during ongoing terrorist operations. He outlines how al-Shabaab used Twitter to interact with followers throughout the attack and draws comparisons between the motivating factors of terrorist use of Twitter during attack and nonattack phases. Mair employs content analysis of tweets from @HSMPress_ and other variants of the handle @HSM to explore the composition and content of tweets from the attack period between 21 and 24 September 2013. Overall, Mair concludes that al-Shabaab was primarily concerned with controlling the narrative of the attack and retaining an audience rather than the more typical focus on recruitment and anti-West rhetoric.

contained a URL, and only two of eight accounts directed users to external sites. Al-Shabaab showed little engagement and interaction with other Twitter users, preferring instead to communicate widely and negating any opportunities to engage with individuals indirectly:

- @HSM_official1: “The term ‘negotiatinn’ [sic] was ruled out absolutely, what we are calling for tho [sic] is Kenya to withdraw its troops from Somalia. @account”
- @HSM_Press2: “@account why would they trace us? Free speech bitch”
- @HSM_Press2: “Follow @HSM_PressOffice, @HSM_PRESS2 @HSM_PRESSOFFIC1 incase [sic] of suspension of any of the above accounts”
- @HSM_PRESSOFFICE2: “Earlier tweets on our suspended acc @hsm_press2 we revealed the names of our mujahideen! And well [sic] tweet the rest #Westgateattach [sic] #Westgate”²⁴

Only 2 percent of the total dataset included references to specific Twitter users.



(Figure by author; data from David Mair, “#Westgate: A Case Study: How al-Shabaab Used Twitter during an Ongoing Attack”)

Figure 2. Tweets by Function

Regarding visuals, which Mair agrees are intrinsically important in terrorist groups’ publicity and propaganda campaigns, al-Shabaab surprisingly broadcast very few images during the attacks.²⁵ Finally, al-Shabaab used psychological warfare techniques to publish threatening tweets; for example, a tweet from @HSM_PRESSOFFICE2 said, “5th squad enroute to ther [sic] undisclosed location to carry our [sic] the next attack! Hoaaa-ah! #alshabaab #westgate.”²⁶ Notably, however, over 70 percent of these tweets contained no threatening content whatsoever.

Content. The findings reveal that the majority of the content was related to the functions of “publicity and propaganda” and “psychological warfare”; “command and control” and “recruitment” functions followed (see figure 1, page 90). The function of *recruitment* and *radicalization* denotes a general call to partake in the global jihad rather than an invocation to join al-Shabaab specifically. *Psychological warfare* indicates the use of direct threats related to future attacks and updates on imminent assaults

elsewhere in Kenya. The function of *command and control* pertains to messaging from al-Shabaab’s highest authorities to begin strikes elsewhere in Nairobi.

The majority of tweets reveals that al-Shabaab’s objectives aimed to further their ideology, justify the attacks, and provide news updates (see figure 2). There were few attempts to secure direct contact with individuals—with the notable exception of journalists, to whom they disseminated press releases of the development of the attack—and little engagement in anti-Western rhetoric. Interestingly, the findings reveal equal treatment of religious and political content.

Analysis

As applied to the context of terrorist attacks, Habermas’s theories suggest that terrorist groups execute a power shift from the state to themselves in their destabilization of the normal order.²⁷ In doing so, they disrupt order to appeal to the civil society which it persuades into checking the illegitimate use of the state’s power.



The Westgate attack itself may thus be understood as an attempt to disrupt the order in Kenyan civil society and government, and to exert specific political demands such as the removal of Kenyan troops from Somalia.

Mair concludes that al-Shabaab restricted the number of links to ensure a captive audience without having to rely on journalists and to provide positive publicity for the group. Arguably, it would have lost whatever sympathy and positive spin was generated by Twitter if the violent acts were celebrated. The lack of wide engagement could be explained as an attempt to preserve the audience's interest in the Twitter account and control the overarching narrative. Among the few cases of direct communications with other users, it could be argued that al-Shabaab contacted individuals for symbolic effect, as opposed to genuine communication purposes. For example, in tweeting user @UKenyata (the president of Kenya), al-Shabaab inflated its own status to that of a source that is as equally reputable and legitimate on the international stage; in the cases of individual interaction with journalists, the group responded to media inquiries to

Forensics investigators work next to the collapsed upper car park at the Westgate Mall 1 October 2013 in Nairobi, Kenya. The damage was caused by the Islamic extremist group al-Shabaab during its attack on the Westgate Mall 21–24 September 2013 that killed sixty-seven people and wounded 175 more. (Photo by Jason Straziuso, Associated Press)

generate positive publicity and fortify its own standing as a legitimate source. Finally, the sparse use of images points to al-Shabaab's implicit understanding that, similar to tweeting violent messages, releasing graphic images would risk losing any positive publicity generated and could turn its Twitter feed audience away.

Mair concludes that the sparse content related to the function of recruitment points to a potential change in recruitment strategy, and particularly, an attempt to signal the group's strength by avoiding a call for new volunteers. Furthermore, the vast majority of the content was related to the function of publicity and content distribution. In this respect, the role of news dissemination throughout the attack signals that

al-Shabaab used Twitter “to practice dynamic propaganda,” a communication that “serves the dual purposes of challenging a critic and broadcasting a certain belief.”²⁸ The lack of engagement with other users, the relatively infrequent invocation of anti-Western language, and the equal treatment of political-religious content reveal two important insights. On the one hand, al-Shabaab expressed an interest in preserving the methodical rhetoric of “news updates.” On the other hand, it exhibited little desire to intimidate the West through openly antagonistic or radical religious language.

In this vein, this study posits that terrorist groups may exploit the public sphere through what Habermas delineates as the “transmuted function of the principle of publicity.”²⁹ Accordingly, al-Shabaab created its own public sphere in its decision to cover the attack via live tweets. Applying Habermas’s concept of the transmuted press as a theoretical filter, the article argues that al-Shabaab limited its interactions with users and maintained a moderate tone throughout the attack to shape the critical public debate. Put simply, the group crafted its own public sphere through the use of social media and assumed the properties of the press in its molding of opinion within that dominated public sphere.

O’Heffernan’s mutual exploitation model of media-government reinforces the power that arises when a terrorist group adopts a media role. As argued, in the context of the Westgate attack, al-Shabaab appropriated the role of the media through its live-tweeting during the assault. It subsequently benefited from an environment of mutual exploitation with policy makers. With this reinforcing dynamic, the media not only becomes part of the process of perception-creation, but also is inherent to the policy process itself. This mutual exploitation strengthened al-Shabaab’s role as the narrative-shaper during the attack—especially so given the vacuum of live reporting on the topic.

Additionally, this article offers Gilboa’s real-time television news coverage model to explain terrorist groups’ motivation to adopt a real-time coverage tool during attacks. The model underscores constraints of the relationship between media (in this case, al-Shabaab) and foreign policy (in this case, defined as domestic and international actors), and explains the strengths of al-Shabaab’s adoption of real-time coverage through live-tweets of the attack. This study proposes that the very constraints of real coverage

on policy makers during crises serve as benefits for terrorist groups during attacks and may thus explain a terrorist group’s motivation for adopting live streaming such as real-time microblogging. In a public sphere in which it appropriates the role of the media, terrorist groups may

- push policy makers to make snap decisions from hurried responses,
- force them to exclude experts in their gathering of information,
- facilitate propaganda and misinformation through deficient reports—or simply “their version” of the attack,
- play upon and create high expectations for further violence or instant resolutions, and
- manipulate the battle for “insight scoops” to legitimize their “scoop” on an attack.

The constraints were, arguably, manipulated by al-Shabaab to its benefit. The group tweeted its version of the development in the mall, frequently sending disdainful messages to the government and Kenyan society at large. Yet it relied predominantly on the dissemination of news updates, facilitating the (mis) information of the attack. This could partially explain why the security response by Kenyan officials was as inconsequential and ineffective as it proved to be. Frequent clashes between the Recce Squad, a special weapons and tactics team trained in counterterrorism operations, and self-appointed armed neighborhood watch units underscore the degree of maladroitness in the security response.³⁰ What is more, mainstream news outlets, such as the BBC, used al-Shabaab’s very tweets as legitimate sources in their own reports, a clear indication of the group’s exploitation of tendencies in mainstream media: a growing sacrifice of validation and in-depth analysis for the sake of real-time coverage. Al-Shabaab’s advantages in adopting live-tweeting during their attack thus constituted a marriage of factors that exploited vulnerabilities, while harnessing strengths of traditional media.

Conclusion

This article has offered a hybridized approach to analyze motivations for and the use of live-tweets during a terrorist attack. The study first reviewed existent literature on social networks in crisis situations and on al-Shabaab’s use of social media to paint

Live-Streaming Attacks

Somewhat mirroring al-Shabaab's use of social media to broadcast its attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, a mass shooter used Facebook to document and publicize his 8 February 2020 attack in northeastern Thailand that resulted in twenty-nine deaths and fifty-seven wounded.



Screenshot of Facebook post

Thai army Sgt. Maj. Jakrapanth Thomma posted messages, photographs, and videos of his attack that began with the shooting of his commanding officer and ended with his firing at random shoppers and workers at the Terminal 21 Mall in Nakhon Ratchasima, about 155 miles from Bangkok. Thomma was killed by security forces nearly seventeen hours after his shooting spree began.

During the attack, Thomma posted comments such as "No one can escape death" and "Getting rich from cheating, taking advantage from others, they must think that money can be spent in hell," referring to an alleged personal disagreement over debt.

Thomma's Facebook page held numerous photos and videos of himself with various weapons and combat gear posted prior to the attack. Facebook eventually shut down Thomma's site in accordance with its "dangerous individuals and organizations" policy that authorizes removal of content that involves praising, supporting, or representing a shooting or the shooter.

Facebook was previously criticized for allowing Brenton Tarrant to live-stream his 2019 mass shooting of fifty-one people in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. The Christchurch massacre led to New Zealand's Arms Amendment Act 2019, which banned semiautomatic firearms, magazines and parts; and to neighboring Australia's The Sharing of Abhorrent Violent Material Act, which mandates penalties for social media companies that do not rapidly remove similarly violent material from their sites.

the scholarly environment in which live-tweeting terror—as a method and research subject—unfolds. Subsequently, it offered a theoretical framework to analyze a terrorist group's motivations to microblog an attack in real-time, positing a hybrid of Habermas's theory on the structural transformation of the public

sphere, O'Heffernan's mutual exploitation model of media influence in U.S. foreign policy, and Gilboa's real-time news coverage model. As the first instance of a terrorist group's use of Twitter to claim responsibility for and cover an attack in real time, al-Shabaab's assault on Nairobi's Westgate Mall in 2013 served as a formidable case study upon which the theoretical framework was tested.

The value of the proposed theoretical framework comes in its combination of sociological and media-based theories, and its potential to systemize analyses of terrorist motivations to exploit live coverage in the digital space. For this very reason, what could be perceived as a weakness in the framework—namely, that it does not offer a postattack analysis of a terrorist group's media usage—is thereto responded by an understanding that this study offers a *motivations-* and *operations-*based approach.

In this vein, the scholarship on terrorism and counterterrorism would benefit from future research on

- the impact that live coverage of attacks has on the formation of responses to terrorist attacks by policy makers and mainstream media;
- the relationship between terrorist groups and mainstream media—more specifically, the confluence of shared information and sources and possible misuse thereof; and
- a rigorous analysis of the variations in dynamics of social media usage by terrorist groups in attack and nonattack phases.

The study posits that a terrorist group's use of live-tweets to cover an attack offers it the opportunity to adopt the role of a media outlet and exploit the strengths of live coverage typically exercised by mainstream media. This poses a unique challenge to policy makers and international media. The study contends that counterterrorist strategies specific to crisis communications throughout a terrorist attack must be further analyzed and developed by mainstream media and relevant governmental bodies.

As Gilboa argued, policy makers today deal with attempts from various actors "to undermine their policies and plans through messages delivered on global television, primarily via the 'breaking news' format that further intensifies the pressure for an immediate response."³¹ These very constraints are exploited by terrorist organizations in their real-time coverage.

Thus, formulators and implementers of counterterrorist strategies today are challenged to

- avoid policy responses to crises that are immediate or based on deficient informational sources;
- cooperate with regard to live coverage of attacks to better manage public and terrorist expectations for immediate solutions;
- rigorously check sources to ensure that they are not associated with terrorist networks;
- create counterterrorism narratives addressed to intended recipients of terrorist Twitter accounts (Historically, efforts have directly targeted terrorist

actors who, as the case of al-Shabaab indicates, are sometimes uninterested in direct contact.); and

- remain cautious of the constraints imposed by real-time coverage of terrorist attacks on their own policymaking and media coverage, and accordingly create proactive responses, such as appeals tailored to real-time attacks.

Sophisticated counterterrorist communications strategies will thus require a sensitive understanding of global and social media constraints, to more cogently address—and feasibly hamper—the dissemination of communicative violence during terrorist attacks. ■

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Consolidating Gains in Northeast Syria

A Whole-of-Government Approach to Evaluating Civil Authority

Lt. Col. Peter Brau, U.S. Army

The following article builds on “Civil Authority in Manbij, Syria,” previously published in Military Review, May-June 2019.

Background

Following the August 2016 liberation of Manbij, Syria, planning for the next stage of the Defeat-ISIS campaign began with Raqqa clearly in the sights of the U.S. Special Operations Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (SOJTF-OIR) and its partner on the ground, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), comprised of Arab and Kurd forces. In April 2013, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared Raqqa the capital of the Islamic State (IS) caliphate, attracting thousands of foreign terrorist fighters to the capital and initiating three years of brutal terror across the city. Following the liberation of Tabqa, a city along the banks of the Euphrates and home to the Tabqa Dam, the SDF’s fifty-five thousand Arab and Kurdish fighters and approximately five hundred U.S. special operations advisors were ready for the push into the city.

The battle for Manbij and its messy humanitarian aftermath were fresh in the minds of leaders determined to avoid the same mistakes that slowed the delivery of essential humanitarian aid, slowed the growth of a civil authority in the city, and revealed gaps between U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) and United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Syria Transition Assistance and Response Team (START), and

their combined ability to assess emerging local governance in the region (see figure 1, page 98).

At the same time, the battle for Mosul in Iraq was underway. With a functioning government in Iraq, humanitarian actors had a key partner in preparing for the displaced persons, medical assistance, and essential services that would be required before, during, and after the battle. Centralized planning and an ability to preposition stocks close to the battle allowed for a much faster response—a response that was lacking in Manbij due to the lack of a functioning governing body in the area and little or no preplanning for what needed to be provided after the fighting stopped.

In planning for Raqqa, the humanitarian community was determined to avoid the gaps in humanitarian assistance that occurred in Manbij. In the weeks and months leading up to the battle for Raqqa, USAID, START, and START-FWD representatives, along with members of the SOJTF-OIR civil affairs staff and non-governmental organization leadership responsible for conducting humanitarian operations in northeast Syria conducted a series of planning sessions to coordinate prepositioning stocks of essential food and nonfood items that would be needed. This synchronized effort between interagency organizations and the Department of Defense (DOD) served to highlight areas where previous lack of planning had occurred and allowed synchronization of the activities that would need to occur as internally displaced persons left the area, to include where and when food would be delivered, the provision



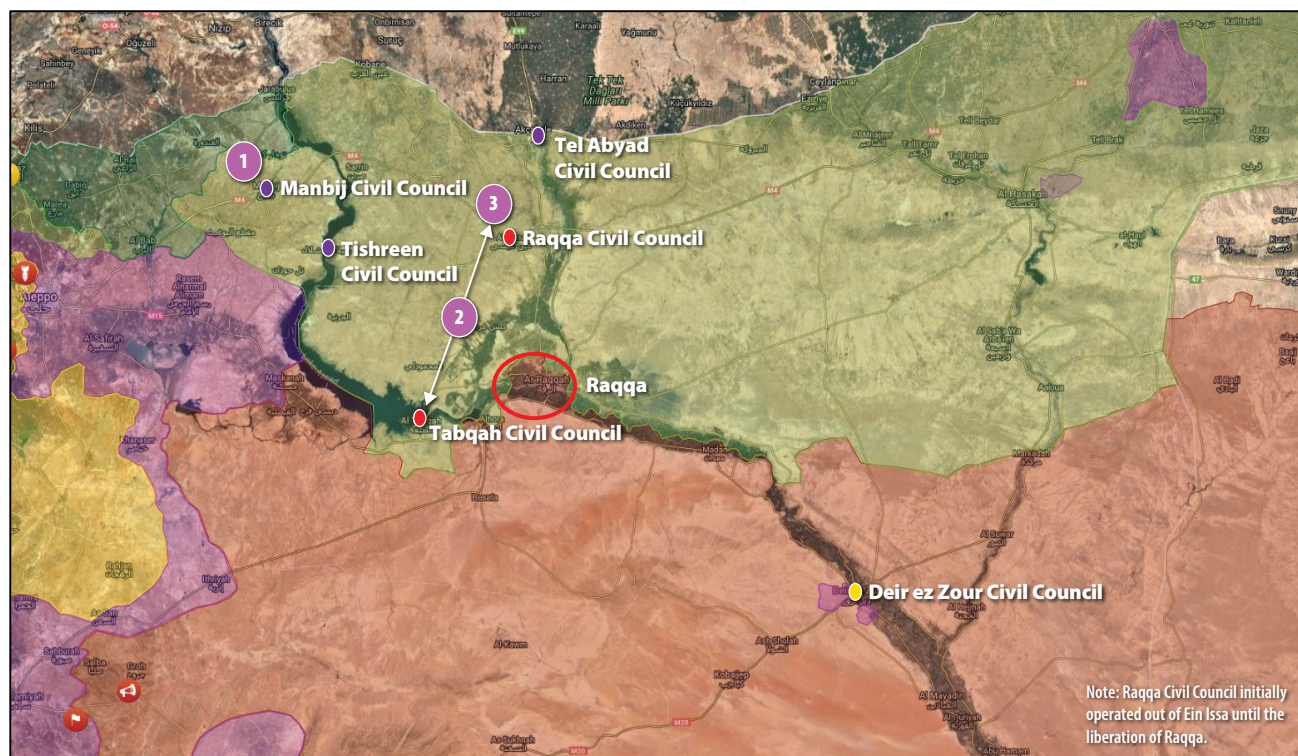
Brig. Gen. Jonathan P. Braga, director of operations for the Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve, talks to shop owners 13 March 2018 about their concerns and impressions regarding the coalition-supported, Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-led reconstruction of their city of Raqqa. Both residents expressed gratitude and confidence in the SDF, as well as concern in the number of remaining improvised explosive devices left by the Islamic State after they were militarily defeated in the city by the SDF. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy Koster, U.S. Army)

of essential and nonessential humanitarian assistance, medical support, and other needs.

Like Manbij, the humanitarian assistance plan included partnering with a local civil council established by key local tribal leaders. The Raqqa Civil Council (RCC), established 18 April 2017, was organized along the same lines as the Manbij Civil Council (later renamed Democratic Civilian Administration of Manbij [DCAM]) with male and female copresidents (one of whom was Kurd and one Arab) and fourteen committees to oversee reconstruction, social affairs, finance, health, education, and other aspects of civilian life. The SDF, as was the case in Manbij, severed itself from civilian rule to allow its main focus to be the Defeat-ISIS campaign. This served to further distinguish the civilian-led governing bodies from the SDF, with the hope of reducing negative perceptions

of a Kurdish-led system of governance and addressing concerns emanating from Turkey.

Perceptions from Turkey would not change, however, from previously held beliefs that anything associated with the SDF (directly or indirectly) would be related to the Kurdish terrorist organization, the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). Turkey's negative stance toward anything related to the PKK resonated with leaders in U.S. European Command and other U.S. and international organizations, helping to create a schism within the interagency organizations where the RCC was concerned. This was not unexpected as Turkey is a NATO ally and was a close and valued partner for decades during the Cold War. Sometimes, however, blind hatred of an organization, like the kind Turkey holds toward the PKK and any of its affiliates, overshadows changes in those affiliates and



- Phase 0 ● Phase 1 ● Phase 2 ● Phase 3 ● Phase 4 ● Phase 5
- Opposition ■ Regime ■ ISIS ■ Syrian Democratic Forces/Kurd ■ Turkey
- 1 Assessment of Manbij Civil Council started with wide disparity between Department of Defense, geographic combatant commands, and Department of State (even between departments of Department of State).
 - 2 Work with Tabqah Civil Council/Raqqah Civil Council began before liberation operations began in Raqqah.
 - 3 Tabqah Civil Council/Raqqah Civil Council officially formed by tribal elders in April 2017. Raqqah Civil Council baseline assessment begun June 2017.

(Figure by author)

Figure 1. Zones of Control at Beginning of Civil Council Assessment, 31 May 2017

the positive impacts they may be making. According to *Military Times*, “Gen. Raymond Thomas, the commander of US Special Operations Command (SOCOM), said the U.S. asked the People’s Protection Unit, or YPG, to re-brand because of its alleged linkages to the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), an internationally designated terrorist group.”¹ The SDF went on to diversify its forces at U.S. request, adding up to twenty thousand Arabs to its ranks in an attempt to broaden its representation and acceptance in the region. Unfortunately, no amount of rebranding or diversification would help fight against its lineage.

Coupled with the negative perception from Turkey were active disinformation campaigns aimed at

increasing social divides between Arabs and Kurds, between the SDF and local internal security forces and the populations they were liberating, and between the DOD and other interagency leaders. Contributors to these disinformation campaigns likely included the Syrian Regime, Iran, Russia, Turkey, displaced leadership from the region, and other disenfranchised groups. The resulting schisms (especially Arab-Kurd and civilian-military) would ebb and flow across the battlefield and often resulted in skewed reporting when interviews were conducted with a small number of participants. Many times, interviews from a small sample of people were used as overarching evidence of deeper divisions in Syria than were actually present



on the ground as observed by members of SOJTF-OIR operating in the area.

Adding to the confusing and often conflicting reporting and the resulting perception was the lack of a common evaluation tool designed to measure the effectiveness of a civil body and its ability to provide governance to an area. The U.S. military does not have a clear way to evaluate the provision of governance—a task that is delegated to the Department of State (DOS) and its representatives on the ground. In this case, however, DOS representatives were located in Turkey and relied on secondhand reporting from their partners in the area. START was attempting to get personnel into Syria; however, this effort took months, and its movements and ability to interact with emerging civilian leadership were severely restricted due to security concerns expressed by DOS security services.

Despite this lack of START presence on the ground, SOJTF-OIR had civil affairs teams who were trained to evaluate civilian organizations but did not have consistent checklists to capture observations on the governing body's ability to provide governance. Early in the campaign to liberate northeast Syria, these civil

Medical equipment is delivered to a Raqqa Civil Council (RCC) medical facility 21 December 2017 in Khatunyah, Syria. The RCC's mission is to rehabilitate areas once controlled by the Islamic State through multiethnic, locally led governance. (Photo by Sgt. Elizabeth Barlow, U.S. Army)

affairs teams reported on governance in Manbij, but it was not until Brett McGurk, presidential envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL (Islamic State), visited Manbij, saw firsthand the conditions on the ground, and ordered START to take civil affairs team reporting as true and accurate that their assessments were valued by USAID and START leadership.

Making Sense through the Confusion

Leadership in the Civil Affairs Operations Division at USCENTCOM saw the need to create an assessment of the RCC that would represent the views of DOD and DOS leadership, but it recognized that additional allies and partners would need to be brought in to lend a nonpartisan view. The question asked at the time was if the RCC had the ability to provide governance functions through its council and committees. An important part

of this assessment was determining whether the members of the RCC were executing the duties necessary to grow the governance capability and not necessarily the provision of essential services. Because of the expected destruction of city services and the length of time it would take to rebuild and provide those services, the key was not whether the essential services were provided (at least initially) but whether the actions of the RCC kept the process moving forward on reestablishing said services.

The intent of the RCC assessment was to establish a recommendation to Gen. Joseph Votel, former USCENTCOM commander, on whether to endorse the RCC as it approached a promised election in May 2018 (twelve months after its formation). Establishing a baseline of effective governance by the RCC, with subsequent quarterly assessments combined with input from inter-agency partners and organizations with equities in a stable and resilient governance mechanism in Raqqa, would allow a clear, whole-of-government view and allow Votel to give his best military advice to the secretary of defense and National Security Council as they developed a Syrian strategy.

The overall RCC assessment was broken into four iterations. The baseline assessment covered the period of June to August 2017, followed by quarterly evaluations. The final assessment took place immediately prior to the scheduled May 2018 election. Creating a baseline was important to assess improvement in or decline of civil governance by the RCC over the twelve months in the evaluation period.



A Syrian Democratic Force member disarms an improvised explosive device (IED) during an exercise 18 October 2017 in Syria. IEDs were often left behind by the Islamic State to cause harm to civilians returning to their communities. (Photo courtesy of the Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve Twitter, [@CJTFOIR](#))

The methodology used during the four assessments would combine modeling of other successful civil councils (specifically DCAM), qualitative data where measurable results could be identified, and qualitative data points of atmospherics, highlights, and perceptions that paint a picture of success or failure. The involved groups



An annual meeting of Raqqa Civil Council's committees 7 January 2019 in Syria. (Photo courtesy of the Syrian Democratic Forces Press, <https://sdf-press.com/>)

months, and its ability to juggle competing demands from outside influencers such as the Syrian Regime, Turkey, the Autonomous Authority (governing body over much of northeast Syria), the United States, and ethnic and sectarian issues. The ability to conduct quarterly assessments and identify areas of strength and weakness, and more importantly, how to assist the

strove to keep at the forefront that *it was the Raqqa Civil Council and its ability to plan, lead, and influence events on the ground that would be evaluated*—not necessarily the success or lack of success of the specific need being addressed. For example, one item assessed was how well the RCC was working through its subcommittees to assess, rehabilitate, and reopen hospitals. What was assessed was twofold: (1) the number of hospitals that were reopened compared to the number open preconflict (quantitative) and (2) perceptions/atmospherics about how the RCC was influencing the reopening of the hospitals (qualitative). The quantitative data would be easily acquired fact (three of ten hospitals reopened).

More challenging would be the qualitative assessment of how well the RCC was addressing the issue and would not be tied to a specific metric as much as it would be a subjective assessment of the RCC's overall effectiveness in addressing the metric. Potential data points would be whether the RCC was reaching out to healthcare leaders locally and abroad, working with demining agencies to clear the buildings, reaching out to the United Nations or nongovernmental organizations to coordinate for supplies to be delivered, etc. Modeling would come into question if the RCC reached out to the DCAM health committee for lessons learned during their return to normalization.

In the end, the success of the RCC would depend on the resiliency it possessed, the local popular support it developed over the next nine to twelve

RCC successfully address some of those challenges would be key to its long-term viability.

A list of fifty questions was created and grouped into seven categories to determine whether the RCC would be a viable partner in governance and how to best focus U.S. efforts to support its continued development. Prior to the assessment, this list was provided to the participating organizations for their review and input to gain buy-in on the mechanism to be used. In the end, twenty-one participants were asked to provide feedback including Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, SOJTF-OIR, European Command, DOS, USAID, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, START, and START-Forward (all DOS elements consolidated their input prior to sending in to ensure a common DOS assessment was provided, thereby avoiding the different views that surfaced in assessing Manbij civil governance), several staff divisions at USCENCOM headquarters, RAND Corporation, and Navanti Group. Additional inputs were also used from open-source reporting and United Nations assessments.

Non-DOD organizations were included to ensure a fair and representative assessment not skewed to a solely DOD viewpoint. RAND conducted a firm assessment of the methodology being used to ensure the assessment met rigorous standards of qualitative and quantitative analysis (rather than providing separate data inputs into the analysis). Allies and regional partners were also asked

to participate as several had forces in the region or could be asked to provide financial support in the future—unfortunately this final source of data did not bear fruit.

Once the data was submitted, each answer was weighted to calculate for a final score. For example, DOS responses weighed more regarding local council formation and governance, while rule of law—which included several questions regarding training and manning of internal security forces—was weighted to SOJTF-OIR responses. This ensured the organizations best poised to provide analysis of the metric were given greater weight than those who were less trained or unable to clearly measure success. The resulting scores were translated into

the typical bubble chart for viewing ease, but data remained available should questions arise. Once the final results were tabulated, results were sent back to the participants for comments and asked to concur or nonconcur with the results to ensure everyone's equities were clearly represented (see figure 2, page 103).

The success of the Manbij Civil Council served as a model of process and a baseline for defining areas of investigation and their milestones. As the RCC continued to grow and establish itself as the governing body in the area, it was able to reach several of these points over the twelve months of the assessment (see figure 3, page 104).

Risks

Identifying risks and the opportunities that presented

themselves was key in determining the progress the RCC was making toward stable governance, and several risks were identified early in the assessment process. Should the RCC fail to solidify and execute the basic governance functions, other potentially malign groups could emerge to fill the void—either IS or other violent extremist organizations such as Tahrir al-Sham in Idlib or elements of the Al-Nusra Front. Providing supplementary assistance through civil affairs teams and START-FWD personnel to nascent committees would increase RCC capabilities faster. Expanding influence of the new RCC and maintaining positive popular support would also be important in keeping support of the tribal sheikhs who initially supported the creating of and nominations of key personnel to the RCC. Long term, having a splintered local governance would weaken any potential bargaining position in negotiating a political solution for the region and the relationships built with key influencers in the area, with the United States and its allies, and with other state actors including Syria, Russia, and Turkey. Key to addressing this risk was the creation of a media committee capable of creating and executing a public relations campaign to influence local, regional, and international audiences supported by DOD and DOS activities.

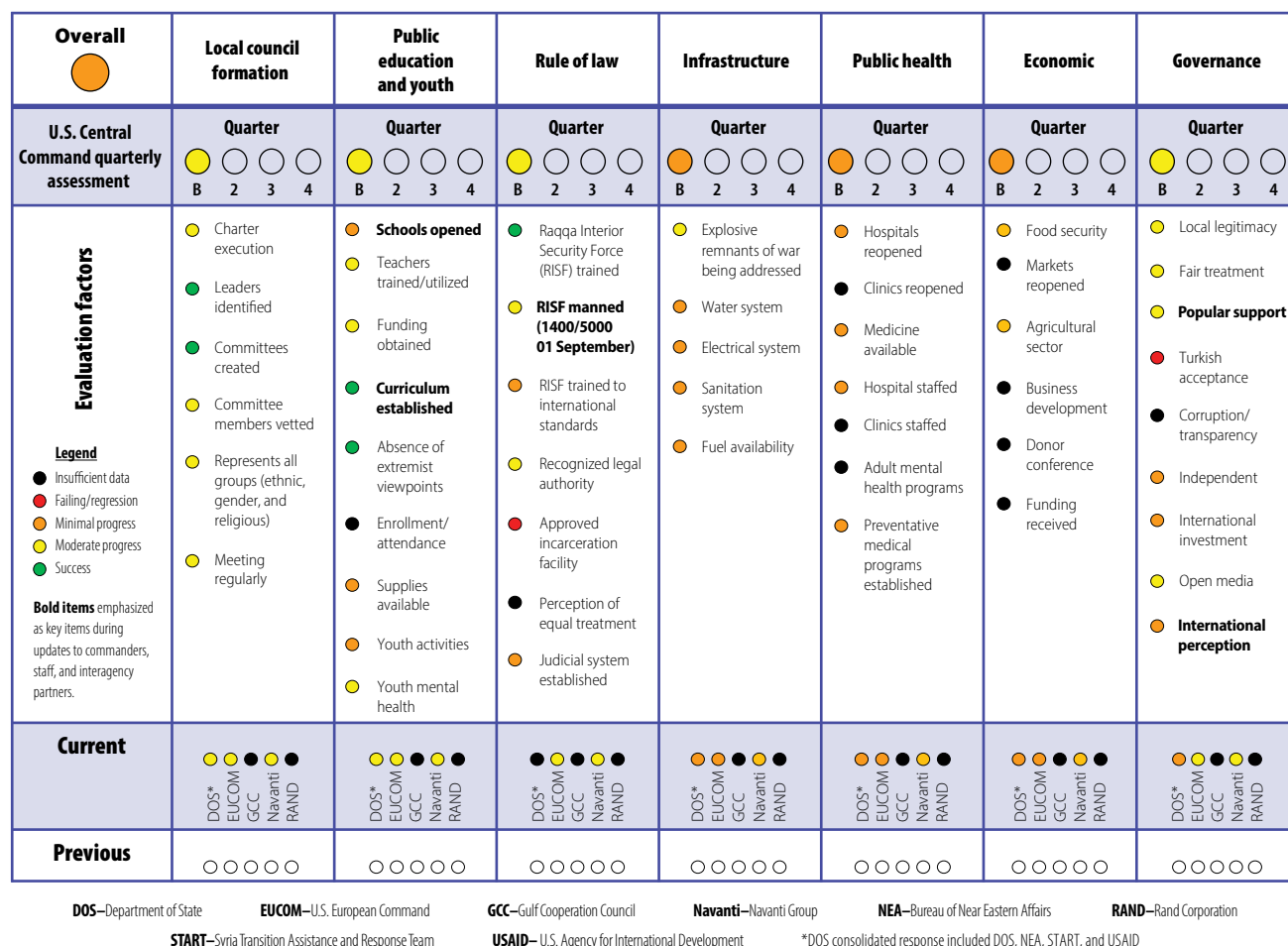
Finally, early on, nongovernmental organizations were working outside the RCC undermining its legitimacy. The threat of creating competing centers of power and influence was real and could have undermined the legitimacy of the RCC as the governing body in the area. A coordination mechanism was created within the RCC to enable closer coordination and deconfliction of the various initiatives underway. The response to each of these risks and opportunities during the twelve-month assessment showed a maturity among the volunteers who made up the RCC leadership and provided opportunities to grow its influence.

Key Takeaways

All the stakeholders involved in the whole-of-government assessment immediately saw the value of having a common assessment tool to ensure unity of effort. By sharing data provided from the participants, several changed their views of the RCC that had previously been based on misperceptions or hearsay rather than factual data.

The RCC was still in its early stages of growth and would take time to mature into its role, but without support from the U.S. government, the consolidation

Lt. Col. Peter Brau,
U.S. Army, is the branch chief, Central Gulf and Iran, in the Communications Synchronization Division, J5 Plans Directorate, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM). He served from July 2016 to July 2018 as the civil information integration officer in the Civil Affairs Operations Division (CAOD), CCJ3, USCENTCOM. While in the CAOD, he was charged with developing an assessment tool that would synchronize the whole-of-government view across the interagency organizations, combatant commands, and service components of the civil councils across northeast Syria in direct response to the disjointed views impacting the assistance provided in Manbij. He has over twenty years of service including active duty, National Guard, and Army Reserve in field artillery, military intelligence, ordnance, logistics, and civil affairs.



(Figure by author)

Figure 2. Baseline Assessment of the Raqqa Civil Council, 15 September 2017

of gains accomplished by the SDF and the liberation of the civilians from IS would have been lost in short order to a chaotic and dangerous environment. Rapid results needed to be seen; time was of the essence, and without immediate wins, popular support would have been at risk as detractors of the RCC would vie for influence in a government vacuum. After six weeks of interaction, START-FWD had changed its stance on the RCC, from a negative perception based on faulty reporting to a positive view bolstered by the understanding that no other body was emerging that had the potential to bring order to the chaos.

Finally, as expected, the planning for the restoration of essential services through the reconstruction committee and planning for the resumption of public education through the education committee saw the most growth. Requirements for equipment and resources for

clearing roads and rebuilding bridges were among the first identified by the RCC, hastening the most visible results (removal of rubble and improving transportation). Teachers were identified, certification classes held, and school supplies delivered to students who had not been in school for years. While the clearing of the school buildings of unexploded ordnance took time, the resiliency of the local culture showed through their efforts to replace windows and restore running water and heating.

The evaluation criteria were designed to be context specific, and as the region is undergoing ongoing change, criteria need to shift alongside. The three assessments conducted before the May 2018 election showed both steady progress and the need to keep evaluation criteria regularly updated.

Each assessment leading up to the May 2018 election demonstrated steady progress. Clinics were reopened,

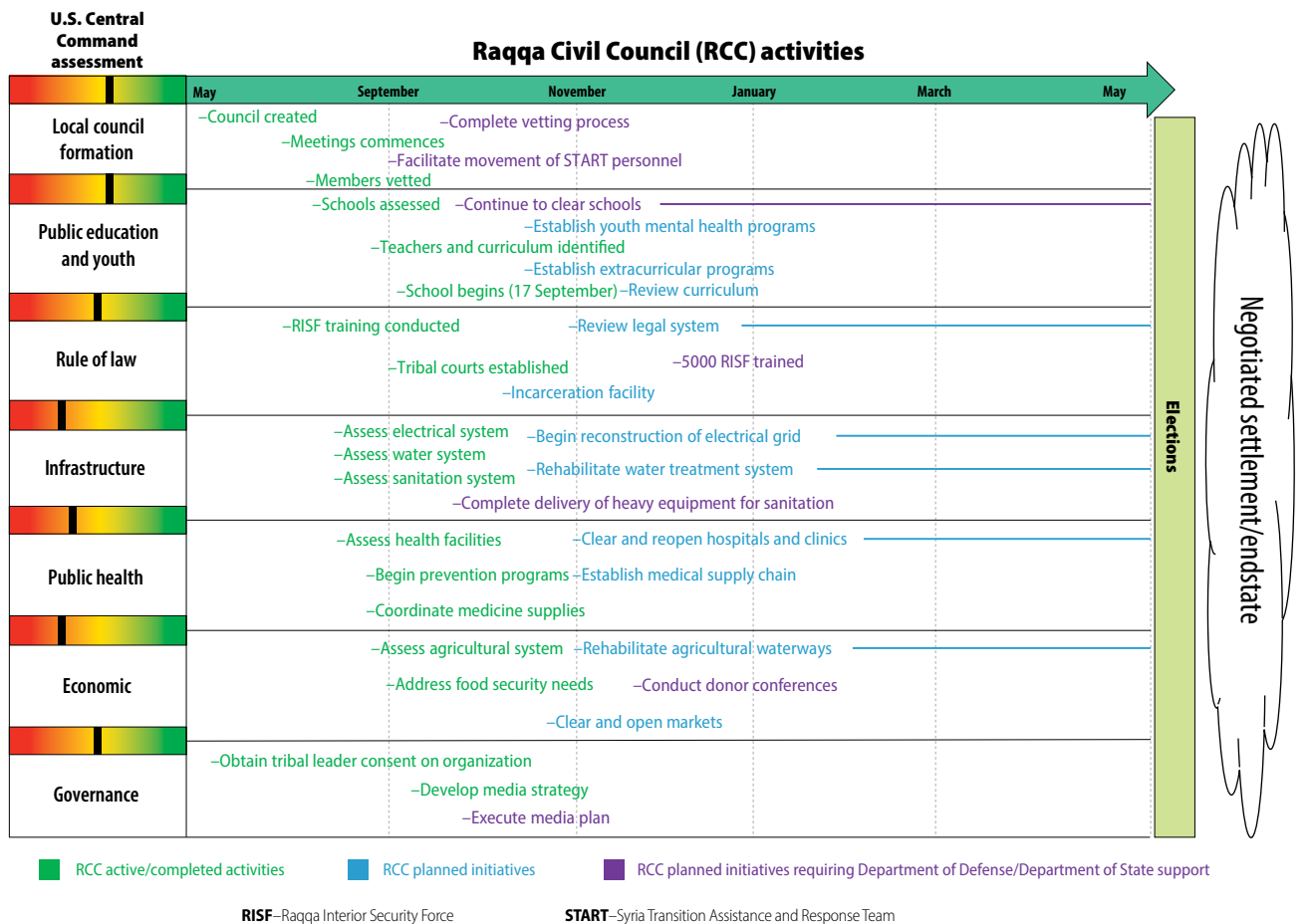


Figure 3. Tasks Based on Manbij Civil Council Modeling for Success, 15 September 2017

sporting events were held, security forces were trained, legal offices opened, and markets emerged providing needed supplies to a growing population. However, progress was not without challenges. Turkey continued its negative campaign against the RCC, claiming members had ties to the PKK and affiliated organizations labeled as terrorist groups by Turkey. Tribal rifts emerged as some Arabs strove to assert themselves and bristled under a Kurdish governance structure. Perceptions had to be constantly corrected and facts brought to bear to ensure participants in the assessments had as much data as possible to make clear assessments not based on faulty perceptions, misinformation, or conflicting information.

Moving Forward from the Final Assessment

During the final assessment in May 2018, Turkey had increased its propaganda campaign against the

RCC and was making threats of crossing the border to secure a buffer zone. This would fundamentally change the political dynamic in the region that resulted from Operation Euphrates Shield (a military operation from August 2016 to March 2017 during which Turkey occupied portions of northern Syria), and further assessments would require significant changes to the evaluation criteria to reflect the change in the situation. Another real-time change affecting future criteria is the growth of other civil councils in Dayr az-Zawr and Al-Shaddadi, as additional population centers were liberated from IS. The Syrian Democratic Council (the Kurdish political organization overseeing most of northeast Syria at the time) was pushing civil councils to join its membership, creating new emerging dynamics. These changes reinforced the need to ensure any assessment tool also matured and changed to reflect changes in the environment.

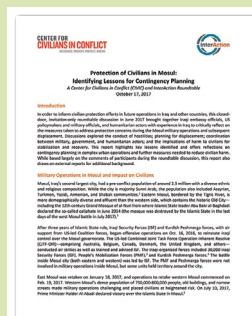
Another ongoing consideration for whole-of-government efforts to stabilize Syria is data collection. Collecting data—even in a permissive environment—was challenging. The constant changeover of personnel at START-FWD (often three-month tours or less) and SOJTF-OIR (six-month tours) presented difficulties in maintaining relationships with committee members as each change in personnel required starting those relationships and establishing trust from scratch. More and more, open-source data was used to provide data points, and the variety of sources to pull this from expanded, making it a challenge to ensure a complete picture with different points of view accurately represented.

According to Col. Tony Thacker, U.S. Central Command Civil Affairs Operations Division chief, one of the unintended, positive consequences of the assessment was how developing the assessment to look at the RCC created the gold standard for the interagency community writ large in informing and unify a whole-of-government approach. Future assessment tools should consider gathering input from the other participating members of interagency partners and the coalition to ensure early buy-in and agreement on the questions being used and the format for presenting the final results. Doing this early in the process allowed a common understanding of evaluation criteria and facilitated common views in the field, at USCENTCOM, and among interagency partner leadership.

Final Thoughts

The creation of an assessment tool that provided common inputs for a whole-of-government evaluation was important to establishing the validity of the RCC as a governing body. In the end, had the RCC not proven itself capable of addressing the issues in front of it—failed to include elements of Arabs, Kurd, Christians,

Turkmen, and other ethnic and sectarian groups, or failed to continue making progress on performing governance functions of essential services, rule of law, and economic revitalization—it is quite possible that some of the other competing civil organizations could have



For those interested in consolidating gains and stability operations as they relate to urban warfare, read the Center for Civilians in Conflict's *Protection of Civilians in Mosul: Identifying Lessons for Contingency Planning*. This report summarizes the background and key lessons learned (by participants in the conflict) associated with administering to the needs of the civilian population of Mosul, Iraq, during fighting for control of the city between the Islamic State and Iraqi government forces from 2016 to 2017. To view the report, visit <https://www.interaction.org/documents/protection-of-civilians-in-mosul-identifying-lessons-for-contingency-planning/>.

challenged the RCC for leadership. Challenges existed—and still exist today—with ethnic tensions, an uncertain future in the face of an uncertain peace agreement with the Syrian regime and Turkish interventions along the border, and remnants of IS and its supporters. Internally displaced persons and hundreds of thousands of refugees still need to return and be reintegrated in the region. Infrastructure needs to be rebuilt. And above all, trust rebuilt between communities.

The United States will continue to be called on to support the civil councils as they work to bring stability and a return to normalcy in the region. The United States has stated it will not be involved in reconstruction in Syria until a final peace agreement is reached, making the role of the new civil councils more important as Syrians strive to make due with less while facing years or decades of rebuilding. While the assessment of the RCC concluded on a positive note, the RCC's continued evolution faces an uncertain future. ■

Special thanks to Col. Tony Thacker, U.S. Central Command Civil Affairs Operations Division chief, who provided direction in the development of the evaluation framework.

Note

1. Shawn Snow, "SOCOM Commander: U.S. Asked YPG to Re-brand Because of Alleged Terrorist Link," *Military Times* (website), 22 July 2017, accessed 8 November 2019, <https://www.militarytimes.com/2017/07/22/socom-commander-us-asked-ypg-to-re-brand-because-of-alleged-terrorist-link/>.

[com/2017/07/22/socom-commander-us-asked-ypg-to-re-brand-because-of-alleged-terrorist-link/](https://www.militarytimes.com/2017/07/22/socom-commander-us-asked-ypg-to-re-brand-because-of-alleged-terrorist-link/).



Sluss-Tiller Tests the Cultural Competence Special Operations Forces Need

Louise J. Rasmussen, PhD

The clock is creeping up on midnight in Pineland. The temperature has dropped what feels like forty degrees in just a few hours. A four-man team huddles with their coaches outside a small cabin. Inside, they just wrapped up a perplexing meeting with a local religious leader.

It is four days into Operation Sluss-Tiller, the three-week culminating exercise for the Army's civil affairs program.¹ Sluss-Tiller is a human-engagement intensive, simulated military operation designed to test everything the students have learned during their nine-month Civil Affairs Qualification Course (Q Course).

Over the past few days, this team and about thirty teams like it have completed more than two dozen engagements with members of the indigenous population in Pineland. These natives are often angry, injured, frightened, or a combination of all the above. They are convincingly portrayed by cultural role players from all over the world speaking several different foreign languages.

Soldiers assigned to the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School speak with indigenous civilian role players 18 July 2019 during Sluss-Tiller, the culmination exercise for civil affairs students, at Camp Mackall, North Carolina. The soldiers were trained in culture, language, social sciences, civil analysis, and planning in complex ambiguous environments in order to carry out civil affairs operations and succeed in the special operations community. (Photo by K. Kassens, U.S. Army)

Many of the engagements, like this one, take place late in the night and into the early morning. The students are tasked with developing relationships with the Pineland natives so they can start putting together an accurate picture of what is going on with the people in the region. Their goal is to come up with a plan to provide assistance, promote stability, and reduce the impact of military operations on the civilian population.

In the debriefing, a couple of team members appear to be struggling to avoid falling asleep where they stand. Even so, the engagement with the religious leader seems to have gone well. He did not get upset, and the team was invited back.

A sergeant who listened in and took notes as another teammate led the engagement is eager to discuss what happened. When the religious leader had described in rapid-fire Arabic how the Americans could help his organization, the sergeant had turned her head and noticed a set of contextual clues—clues implying that this local leader might not be “a good guy.”

Louise J. Rasmussen, PhD, is lead author of *Save Your Ammo: Working across Cultures for National Security*. She has interviewed hundreds of Department of Defense professionals with extensive experience serving in roles that require intensive intercultural interactions. She is a founder and principal scientist at Global Cognition, where she works to advance cultural competence in demanding environments through research, training, and assessment.



“I want to talk about the elephant in the room,” she says. “I didn’t know how to bring this up without making it contentious,” she continues.

The sergeant’s dilemma highlights an inherent challenge in preparing personnel for high-intensity situations when working in the human domain. Making progress developing relationships and doing business does not simply rely on the ability to avoid being clumsy with regard to understanding and respecting cultural traditions.² Instead, people in such fields face thorny decisions when it comes to tactfully engaging local populations, leaders, and foreign partners. The concepts of good and bad, right and wrong, are murky. Personnel must be able to decide when to accommodate foreign beliefs and practices and when to put their foot down and say, “This isn’t going to work.” They need to decide when to show respect and when to accrue respect. To walk this line effectively, they need to be able to see their decision space clearly.³

Sluss-Tiller as a Criterion Task Set for Training

In the fall of 2017, I spent two days in Pineland observing Operation Sluss-Tiller. Along with my team of researchers, I also interviewed students from all Army special operations forces branches (ARSOF), including

Soldiers assigned to the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School speak with indigenous civilian role players 3 April 2019 during Sluss-Tiller at Camp Mackall, North Carolina. (Photo by K. Kassens, U.S. Army)

civil affairs (CA), Special Forces, and psychological operations. In addition, we talked to some of their instructors and coaches at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

These efforts were part of an analysis we conducted to determine the cultural training needs of ARSOF operators.⁴ We were supporting new instruction development in the Special Warfare Education Group’s (SWEG) Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture (LREC) program. The researchers were brought on because SWEG leadership suggested that the Adaptive Readiness for Culture (ARC) competence model serve as the basis for the culture component within their courses (see table, page 109).

The ARC model was developed for the Defense Language National Security and Education Office. The basis for the development of the ARC model is that Department of Defense (DOD) personnel are deployed to multiple regions throughout their careers, but they cannot

be expected to become regional experts in all the places they are required to work.⁵ They need a general set of skills that supports them in quickly gaining the ability to work in new cultures. The ARC model has been recommended as a framework to guide culture training across the DOD.⁶

The ARC model consists of twelve culture-general competencies, organized into four domains that support maintaining a diplomatic mindset, cultural learning, cultural reasoning, and intercultural interaction.⁷ Each of the twelve ARC competencies includes a set of knowledge, skills, and behavioral strategies that enable the competency.

The ARC model was developed based on a field study of the cultural skills and knowledge used by more than two hundred culturally experienced conventional and special operations personnel from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and other supporting agencies. The sample included personnel in a wide range of jobs such as diplomats, F-16 fighter aircraft pilots, tactical air controllers, construction engineers, pest control managers, convoy commanders, criminal investigators, chefs, logistics planners, Navy SEALs, Special Forces, intelligence analysts, interrogators, explosive ordnance disposal specialists, submarine commanders, and others. Thus, it is possible that the ARC model is too general and does not give a good description of the aspects of cultural competence that are needed for specific jobs and missions, such as those associated with ARSOF. On the other hand, it is also possible that the model captures specific training needs for the most part but requires customization for best alignment with specific learner groups.

We examined the alignment between ARC and ARSOF training needs by analyzing Sluss-Tiller, the

CA culminating exercise. We selected Sluss-Tiller because it comprises a criterion task set designed to replicate ARSOF missions and test students' skills in the face of real-world job demands. Another consideration was that CA missions require intense and sustained analysis and intercultural engagements. Therefore, the training needs we could observe in

Sluss-Tiller can be taken to represent an upper bound of cultural difficulty that captures the needs of all ARSOF specialties, including Special Forces and psychological operations.

Our goal was to examine the extent to which ARC competencies were required for successful performance in Sluss-Tiller, and thereby establish whether ARC is a reasonable basis for culture-training requirements in SWEG's LREC program.

Cultural Competence Requirements in Operation Sluss-Tiller

The demands of Sluss-Tiller were very closely aligned with the competencies and supporting knowledge and skills described in the ARC model. During my two days in Pineland, I observed more than one hundred instances where students used the ARC model competencies to support analysis and engagement, or the ARC competencies were encouraged or reinforced by coaches during planning and feedback sessions. When I reviewed my observations with my team, we

also noted that students could use additional reinforcement and practice to hone many of these skills and to facilitate transfer to new situations.

In the following sections, I give some specific examples of how the ARC supports analysis and engagement performance required by ARSOF job demands as they were revealed in Sluss-Tiller.

Table. Adaptive Readiness for Culture Competencies

Diplomatic mindset
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintains a mission orientation 2. Understands self in cultural context 3. Manages attitude toward culture
Cultural learning
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Self-directs own cultural learning 5. Develops reliable information sources 6. Reflects and seeks feedback on intercultural encounters
Cultural reasoning
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Copes with cultural surprises 8. Develops cultural explanations of behavior 9. Takes perspective of others in intercultural situations
Intercultural interaction
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Acts under cultural uncertainty 11. Plans intercultural communication 12. Engages in disciplined self-presentation

(Table by author)



ARSOF have to manage culture-mission conflicts. Building and maintaining relationships with foreigners is a critical aspect of ARSOF missions. Building rapport can seem like an intuitive skill that does not need to be trained. However, building rapport in the intense and often stressful context of ARSOF missions can be a significant challenge. My observations during Sluss-Tiller suggest that students would benefit from additional systematic training on building rapport in intercultural situations. The first ARC competency, *maintains a mission orientation*, includes specific knowledge and skills that support building and maintaining rapport for the sake of mission advancement.

A challenge that students consistently faced with respect to rapport was how to manage furthering mission objectives when “locals” made demands or asked for things that were unexpected, out of their purview, or counter to their mission goals or personal beliefs. These situations put students in challenging positions. They need to maintain rapport with the locals to further their mission objectives. However, saying “no”

Special operations forces establish the first community defense initiative site July 2009 at Nili Village, Daykundi Province, Afghanistan. Successful accomplishment of what is now commonly known as village stability operations requires mastery of the competencies taught at the U.S. Army’s Civil Affairs Qualification Course and validated during the Sluss-Tiller exercise. (Photo courtesy of the Office of the Command Historian)

to a local could jeopardize the relationship he or she is trying to build. Most students took a noncommittal approach with the goal of “being nice” or “showing respect.” While this is a valid approach in some cases, in others it can lead to a stalemate and hinder the accomplishment of mission objectives.

As part of the first ARC competency, ARC prescribes the skill of recognizing when mission objectives conflict with cultural norms and managing that conflict. Adopting this skill as an LREC training requirement would help students identify conflicts between their missions and intercultural situations. Systematic instruction would provide students with the opportunity

to think through, develop, and practice conflict management strategies beyond “being nice” or “showing respect” in order to facilitate maintaining rapport while also moving mission objectives forward.

ARSOF has to learn about culture in a self-directed way. In Sluss-Tiller, students were frustrated when they did not know basic customs for interacting with the different cultural groups they encountered during the training scenarios. They often described this challenge as a failure on the part of the LREC program.

A closer look at students’ negative evaluation characterizes it not as a failure but rather as an effective scenario design in Sluss-Tiller. ARSOF soldiers face the inevitable reality that they will be deployed to countries outside of their region of expertise—regions where they will not be familiar with local language and customs. In these situations, students need strategies to help them quickly identify key cultural information that will help them with their missions. Instilling a mindset of self-directed cultural learning will enable students to seek out learning opportunities on their own and to not exclusively rely on formal training.

The ARC model includes three competencies to support cultural learning: *self-directs own cultural learning*, *develops reliable information sources*, and *reflects and seeks feedback on intercultural encounters*. Adopting ARC as a basis for LREC requirements would introduce students to a set of learning skills that could help them get more out of their qualification training experience, future overseas deployments, and sustainment training.

ARSOF has to interpret perplexing cultural behavior. ARSOF missions require analysis of the host population as well as face-to-face engagements with individuals from a target culture. The ARC competency *develops cultural explanations of behavior*, connects analysis and engagement, providing the skills needed to understand cultural behavior so it can be anticipated and influenced.

Sluss-Tiller included many instances where students had to figure out what was behind locals’ behavior. Building functional explanations of cultural behavior that support analysis and engagement is a complex skill that requires systematic development and practice.

We noted instances where students developed functionally limited explanations of behavior that did not support effective decision-making. For example, when a local doctor in Pineland made a surprising decision about how to dispense medication, one student proposed that

“he must be incompetent.” Based on this interpretation, the team decided to distribute the medication themselves. However, generating any alternative explanation for the doctor’s behavior would have enabled students to see other options for handling the situation.

The ARC competency *develops cultural explanations of behavior*; is supported by a set of knowledge and skills including multiple, alternative explanations of behavior; uses local cultural concepts when constructing explanations of native behavior; and develops integrated (deep causal) explanations of cultural behavior.

Teaching students to develop multiple explanations that incorporate cultural knowledge relevant to what is going on in a situation has benefits both for students’ cultural engagement and analysis capabilities. First, learning to come up with multiple explanations for behavior would increase the likelihood that students can understand, anticipate, and identify the levers for influencing behavior as part of their engagements. Second, appreciating the application of cultural information to engagement should give students a framework for determining what information they want out of an analysis process and why, which should increase their motivation to conduct a thorough cultural analysis.

The engagement with the local doctor also shows that the team neglected to try to understand the local doctor’s perspective. They did not think about his social and cultural background or his potential constraints or motives. That means the students were not applying the ARC competency *takes perspective of others in intercultural interactions*.

The need for this ability and the current low level of student competence were pointed out to me by a training coach as well. I watched this coach repeatedly remind students to take the perspective of the locals when they were planning for an engagement. Despite these reminders, several groups of students almost exclusively focused on their own information requirements and what they wanted to get out of conversations. This left them without options for adapting their engagement strategy based on the demands and responses of the locals.

ARSOF has to be deliberate about how it engages people from other cultures. “When he opened the door, man, you were right there—in his face. Notice all that stuff on your front?” The student points to the canteens,

radio, and other gear on his teammate's chest. It altogether seems to stick out about a foot.

"Imagine having someone like you, right in your face with all that stuff. Maybe just back up a little when they open the door next time."

Sluss-Tiller repeatedly challenges students to think about how they appear to the locals during their engagements. On a couple of occasions, I overheard students and coaches discuss the relative value of a deadpan, or emotionless, face in different situations. In some contexts, it is good (e.g., if one is standing guard). It is not good, however, for building rapport.

The ARC competency *engages in disciplined self-presentation* is supported by a set of knowledge and skills that enable personnel to present themselves in a way that achieves an intended effect with an audience with a different cultural background.

Every time a team gets ready to go into an engagement in Sluss-Tiller, they do a huddle to talk through how they want the conversation to go. These planning huddles are opportunities to think about what someone from a different culture might want or need. They are also opportunities for the students to talk through where they already have common ground with the people they are about to engage with—and where they do not. Doing this allows them to deliberately frame their messages and the language they use to communicate them.

I noticed several instances where students did not adapt the way they were speaking to their audience. In one instance, a civilian leader in Pineland asked a student to describe his plan for getting supplies to them. The student responded, "We need to establish your capabilities first." He received a blank stare. In another instance, a student told a group of locals that some nongovernmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations would come in to help with a problem they were having. In both these cases, these students received feedback from their coaches that they needed to be mindful of military speak and the language they use in general.

Sluss-Tiller challenges the students' ability to think in advance about how to tailor and adjust communication to audiences with different cultural backgrounds—from their word choice to the persuasive arguments they use. Adapting communication content and means of expression is critical in intercultural engagements, and the skills and knowledge related to this ability are captured in the *plans intercultural communication* ARC competency.

It can be very easy to forget to think about how one appears to others and what other people are thinking, and to take the time to come up with alternative explanations for their behavior, especially in the intense and stressful engagements civil affairs students experience in Sluss-Tiller.

Our observations indicate that although students are exposed to knowledge and skills like those in the ARC model, students were not consistent in their use of the competencies, and they were not always effective in enacting them. This is not surprising. These are complex cognitive skills that require a great deal of reinforcement and practice under varying conditions to successfully transfer to real-world situations.⁸

Cultural Training Needs

The engagements students are confronted with in Sluss-Tiller appear to present the same cognitive and cultural challenges that DOD personnel encounter in real-world operations. Just like in the real world, in Sluss-Tiller engagements, students are confronted with shocking, surprising, and ambiguous intercultural situations that are often morally challenging, where the stakes are high, and where decisions must be made quickly.

Also, in Sluss-Tiller, like in the real world, the cultural issues are murky. That is, it is not obvious where "the culture" is. It does not just boil down to taking off one's sunglasses or not showing the bottoms of one's feet. Culture is built into the actions and motivations of the role players—which makes it harder to see, just like in the real world. This means that students cannot simply follow a few simple dos and don'ts and still "get it right."

We confirmed that Sluss-Tiller provides a good criterion task set for defining ARSOF cultural training needs. We also established that the ARC model provides a good description of the key competencies students need in Sluss-Tiller. This validates the model as providing a sound basis for culture training requirements in SWEG's LREC program. In other words, our observations suggest that using the ARC model as a framework for defining what students are expected to get out of LREC instruction should result in students who are better prepared for their culminating exercises and better prepared to go out to the operational force.

Recommendations

Make cultural competence part of the ARSOF narrative. Cultural competence is often talked about in

ways that make it difficult to see its value for national defense. That makes it seem like it might be hard to teach. To successfully cultivate cultural competence in the force, the narrative about what it is needs to change.

Cultural competence is not about being nice, sensitive, cosmopolitan, or ethnorelative. It is not something a person is; it is something a person does. Cultural competence is a set of skills that allows a person to see alternative ways to interpret, interact with, and act on

at all levels should recognize and reward instances of “smart decisions” associated with cultural competence, even if it is just with positive attention.

Use the ARC model to teach cultural competence and provide professional development for staff. We recommend that ARC competencies be used to define expectations for cultural competence learning outcomes in LREC programs of instruction. To provide students with the sustained practice of the skills and knowledge under-

“Cultural competence is a set of skills that allows a person to see alternative ways to interpret, interact with, and act on the foreign human elements in his or her environment.”

the foreign human elements in his or her environment. These are critical skills that help a person be smart about what his or her options are in a complicated decision space so that he or she can build lasting relationships and find solutions that make a real difference in the environment he or she is working in.

This means that cultural competence is a central component of many of the functions civil affairs, ARSOF in general, and conventional forces use in order to complete missions. It should be talked about this way, and it should be taught this way.

Right now, many ARSOF students believe cultural competence is about showing respect and accommodating foreign customs and beliefs indiscriminately. However, others may dismiss the need for these skills because they do not see its relevance to their jobs. In our interviews, we heard the following sentiments expressed: “I don’t need to know this culture stuff. I’ll get a briefing before we go that will tell me what I need to know”; and “There’ll be someone else on my team who’s responsible for this.”

We recommend that civil affairs, ARSOF, and the military in general change the narrative around cultural competence. The new narrative should talk about it in a way that makes it clear that it is a core job capability.

Further, to make cultural competence part of the national defense narrative, it should be included and described in clear, actionable language in doctrine, guidelines, mission and vision statements, plans, and other documents that define expectations. Organizations

lying the ARC model that is needed to promote transfer, ARC competencies should be introduced and subsequently practiced in all LREC training courses, including language and regional analysis. This would further serve to provide students a cohesive LREC training experience.

To be consistent with adult-learning principles, and to combat the perception among students that “this isn’t essential,” such instruction should explicitly demonstrate to students the relevance and value of cultural skills and knowledge to accomplishing their tasks and missions.⁹ Cultural competence is an aspect of what the work-military personnel already do (when they do it well).¹⁰ It should be taught as an aspect of military practice. This means that instruction and practical exercises should build and evaluate cultural skills and knowledge in the context of mission-essential tasks.

To ensure that instruction provides a space for students to practice ARC competencies and not just acquire theoretical knowledge, we recommend adopting a pedagogical approach that incorporates problem-based instruction. In problem-based instruction, students practice culture-general competencies by reading, discussing, and self-directing exploration of complex real-life scenarios.

Problem-based learning has two advantages for target learners who are focused on application. First, it emphasizes active, transferable learning. Second, it tends to generate lively class discussions that engage and motivate students.¹¹

To make the implementation of such a curriculum transformation possible, we further recommend that

LREC staff receive professional development that teaches them what ARC is and helps them understand why these cultural skills and knowledge are important for their students to learn.

Finally, staff should receive training to help them become familiar and comfortable with a Socratic, facilitation style of teaching. This is important because the goal of a program that teaches ARC competencies is to develop cultural adaptability in students. That means the program should develop in students the thinking and learning skills needed to get up to speed and figure out how to engage in any new, unfamiliar culture. To realize this goal, instructors must be able to facilitate dialogue between students and must be comfortable asking and answering questions designed to stimulate critical thinking, draw out divergent perspectives, and examine assumptions.

Use the ARC model as a common language for describing human-domain capabilities. When ARSOF students join the operational force, they will inevitably be expected to be assets in engagements that involve people with different beliefs, values, and perceptions. These engagements are fundamentally intercultural in nature.

Developing cultural competence is not a one-shot enterprise. It takes time and practice. No single book,

article, workshop, course, exercise, or even immersion gets the job done. ARSOF needs a coherent program of instruction that deliberately and systematically cultivates and sustains the skills soldiers need to collaborate with, influence, and disrupt people with divergent worldviews.

We recommend that ARSOF considers using the ARC model as a framework and common language for promoting and describing the skills required to operate in the human domain. Doing so could provide the basis for developing a standardized rubric across the Q courses and beyond that express what is expected of ARSOF soldiers. This would, in turn, provide a basis for giving meaningful, objective performance feedback in this area. Adopting the ARC model as a unifying framework would also provide a consistent language for talking about the human-domain capabilities taught in the Q courses and for effectively communicating the value CA and ARSOF, in general, bring to the rest of the Army. ■

The author appreciates the discussions and assistance provided by Lt. Col. James Vchulek, Maj. Sam Hayes, and Mr. Bob Jones, as well as Dr. Winston Sieck and Ms. Jasmine Duran. The studies described in this article were supported by Special Operations Command and the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense, Defense Language and National Security Education Office.

Notes

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Walls

by Kevin M. James

*Lord, break down the walls that come between
as I walk through this life I am not really seen
I've built my facade so carefully crafted
Brick upon brick a warrior was grafted
on top of my soul, these walls block me in
they keep everyone out, and protect what's within
These walls keep you all from really seeing
my hopes dreams and fears, the core of my being
Walls that were built to protect my heart
have kept me from truly being a part
of deep fellowship with my brothers and sisters
I've become a lone sentry facing life's twistlers
When I open the door and let you come near
I tremble and shake, paralyzed with fear
But to my great surprise I don't find more pain
What I discover is we're all the same
I find that these warriors are all just like me
We all want our hearts to truly be free
The truth of the matter, we're all so much greater
Bonded in spirit, made by our creator
When I let you in we all get to see
who I am, who you are, who we're all meant to be*

Lt. Col. Kevin M. James, U.S. Air Force, is a staff officer at United States Strategic Command. He is a Cyberspace Operations officer, has been a squadron commander and served on the Joint Staff. He served in Turkey as the 39th Operations Group/39th Expeditionary Operations Group Executive officer in 2002 and 2003 in support of Operation Northern Watch and in Bagram with the 160th Signal Brigade as the Deputy Director for the Joint Network Control Center in 2013-2014.

Photo: A soldier assigned to 2nd Battalion, 198th Armored Regiment, 155th Brigade Combat Team, Mississippi Army National Guard, takes a moment to rest 30 May 2017 during Decisive Action Rotation 17-07 at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California. (Photo by Spc. Dana Clarke, U.S. Army)





Rethinking Uzbekistan

A Military View

Maj. Daniel J. O'Connor, U.S. Army

By taking a new look at the United States' posture and defense spending in Central Asia, the United States can more accurately and efficiently build lasting, mutually beneficial relationships with valuable partners, which is a clear U.S. goal.¹ Within the Central Asian region, Uzbekistan shows the greatest promise to yield maximum results for minimum investment. It is hard to overstate the importance of a sustained and stable Central Asia because the effects of stability there will have dramatic second- and third-order effects, not only for the United States but also for others that have been involved in the region. This includes bolstering regional stability and prosperity and providing overt signaling from the United States to support its values.

A strong regional leader could possibly take the lead on development in the entire region. If the United States backs this specific partner, it can aid in stabilizing the region further, which would have short- and long-term benefits for U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. Investing in such a partnership in Central Asia could bolster regional dialogues to include the C5+1 organization (consisting of the five Central Asian states and the United States), which soon may begin to morph into the C6+1 with recent overtures from the administration of Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Kabul in hopes of extending stability south of its

borders.² A stronger C5+1, especially one that includes Afghanistan, will bolster the cohesion of the Central Asian countries but will also allow the United States to find its way onto the ground floor of influence.

The historical background of Uzbekistan has made many policy makers shy away from extending focus and funding to that country. Due to the recent social shift in the country (particularly under the leadership of President Mirziyoyev), Uzbekistan provides a valid option for a long-term U.S. partnership in the region.

History of U.S./Uzbek Relations

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan was one of the new countries that fought hardest against economic transition to a market economy, a fact that shows even today as its economy lags behind several other regional states in various areas like economic development.³ The late Islam Karimov became Uzbekistan's first president in 1991 and stayed in power for more than twenty years. During his rule, he created an authoritarian government that routinely ranked as one of the harshest authoritarian regimes in the world, particularly in the areas of religious freedom and human rights.⁴

The United States began fostering relations with the region through NATO's Partnership for Peace program shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁵ Moreover, following the events of 11 September 2001, Uzbekistan was one of the key supporters of U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, going so far as to offer the use of its Karshi-Khanabad (K2) Air Base in southern Uzbekistan for the transit of aircraft and troops to Afghanistan.⁶ However, these closer relations were short-lived because Uzbekistan removed its U.S. presence following the Andijan incident in 2005.⁷

The incident in Andijan led to a freeze in relations that followed the event and explains why U.S. policy

Previous page: Soldiers from U.S. Army Central and the Uzbekistan army participate in Mountain Warfare Exchange August 2018 in Forish, Uzbekistan. Over the five-day event, six instructors from the U.S. Army Northern Warfare Training Center and fourteen Uzbekistan army personnel shared processes and procedures related to operating in a mountainous environment and practiced various mountaineering techniques. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan)



U.S. Secretary of Defense Dr. Mark T. Esper meets with the Uzbekistan Minister of Defense Bakhodir Kurbanov 12 July 2019 at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Sgt. Amber I. Smith, U.S. Army)

makers and many scholars are hesitant to commit increased funding to Uzbekistan. In the early 2000s, the Bush administration saw Uzbekistan as a strategic foothold in the region and a “key strategic partner” in the Global War on Terrorism.⁸ However, in 2005, police allegedly beat up local citizens for protesting the trials of prominent local businessmen. Several dozen locals then stormed the police station, stole arms, and released several prisoners (including the aforementioned businessmen). The resulting reaction from Karimov, who flew to Andijan to direct operations personally, resulted in over one hundred deaths, allegedly from firing on civilians by the Uzbek security forces.⁹ No accurate figures can be agreed upon, since outside authorities were not allowed in to investigate. The U.S. government’s working figure from 2005 was 173 deaths.¹⁰ Some scholars, especially locals, place the number of deaths significantly higher.¹¹

The United States was hesitant to comment on or condemn the incident, but eventually did, breaking with one of the implied conditions of the United States’ use of the K2 Air Base; specifically, that the United States would not comment on anything relating to alleged human rights abuses in Uzbekistan.¹² The Andijan

incident, paired with Islam Karimov’s ejection of U.S. forces from the K2 Air Base, led to a complete freeze in aid funding and bilateral military cooperation, which is still felt in today’s military and diplomatic environment in Uzbekistan. This complicated past suggests a culture that understands group identity, belonging, and relations with outside populations very differently than most Western powers, a point that should be kept in mind.

While few would argue that a measured reaction to the Andijan incident was called for, the American handling of the situation caused severe consequences to the bilateral relationship with Uzbekistan. Security aid resumed in the late years of the Karimov era in Tashkent, but it was nothing compared to pre-Andijan levels.¹³

Post-Karimov Uzbekistan

After the death of Islam Karimov in September 2016, Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev was elected

president. Mirziyoyev immediately set an agenda to restructure the government, increase religious tolerance, and reform the economy.¹⁴ After releasing a new five-year development strategy in mid-2017, Mirziyoyev proceeded to liberalize the economy by adopting new policies designed to eliminate the black market in currency and allow the exportation of profits for local businesses.¹⁵ New policies have encouraged more foreign investment and fostered social change, including the unblocking of websites, the release of political prisoners, labor changes, and the adoption of a “good neighbor policy” with regard to Central Asia.¹⁶ This final piece has already begun a positive shift with Uzbekistan improving relations with governments in the region.¹⁷

None of this should overshadow Mirziyoyev’s changes to the defense and security sectors. Uzbekistan’s new defense doctrine, released in December 2017, was seen by the U.S. defense community as a positive step due to its new emphasis and direction for military modernization and professionalization, as well as articulating the situation in Afghanistan as a significant issue that the country needed to tackle, with noted approval at the very highest levels of government.¹⁸ Mirziyoyev also dismissed the head of the oft-feared and endemically corrupt National Security Service, Rustam Inoyatov. As one of the final remaining holdovers from the Karimov era, Inoyatov’s firing was a clear indication that Mirziyoyev was intent on reforming the security sector in Uzbekistan and removing those who were not “engaged in the tasks they are assigned.”¹⁹ In explaining the shakeup of many aspects of Uzbek governance, Mirziyoyev spoke plainly, saying that many relieved security officials failed to live up to the trust placed in them, utilized methods that belonged to the previous administration, and showed a lack of connection with the troops they led.²⁰

The Validity of Uzbekistan as Primary Partner in Central Asia

In Central Asia, the United States needs a partner that will not only pair well and provide opportunities for regional power projection but will also take a leading role in a solution for Afghanistan. While many other powers are involved in Afghanistan, scholars Kristin Fjaestad and Heidi Kjaernet observed that Afghanistan is specifically an “arena where Central Asian states can participate.”²¹ The examination that follows of the other countries in the Central Asia region reveals both that

building partnerships in the region supports U.S. effort to stabilize Afghanistan and that Uzbekistan is the best situated country toward which to focus U.S. partnership efforts, despite the freeze in relations that occurred during the Karimov regime.

Kazakhstan. The United States has put in considerable effort to develop a closer partnership with Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan was a successful model of economic transition after the fall of the Soviet Union, and natural resources have provided it with a great deal of financial stability. However, it still suffers from many authoritarian regime issues without seeming authoritarian to many outsiders, or as Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way term it, “competitive authoritarianism.”²² Many policies enacted by the administration under former President Nursultan Nazarbayev benefit the wealthy in many different areas such as energy, economics, and even land reform.²³ Further, Kazakhstan has failed to diversify its economy beyond the exploitation of raw materials, has retained harsh treatment of the press, and has failed to reform the country’s political processes.²⁴

Kazakhstan sits firmly within the Russian sphere of influence. While Kazakhstan pursues multivector diplomacy to include China and several Western states, Russia is still its partner of preference when it comes to trade and military affairs. Many argue that despite changing geopolitical conditions, Kazakhstan’s long border with Russia will likely influence continued close security ties.²⁵ Finally, Kazakhstan does not share a border with Afghanistan.

The United States is looking for a partner that can help take a leadership role in

Maj. Daniel J. O’Connor, U.S. Army, is a foreign area officer currently assigned to the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. He previously served as the deputy chief, Office of Military Cooperation at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. O’Connor holds a BA in classics and ancient Mediterranean studies from the University of Connecticut, an MBA from the College of William and Mary, and an MA in Eurasian, Russian, and East European studies from Georgetown University. He has served in the Army as a logistics officer and has deployed in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

finding a solution in Afghanistan. While Kazakhstan has generally taken a role in supporting Afghan stability, its commitment and cooperation will always be limited when compared to a country that borders Afghanistan. A good example of the primacy of Afghanistan's border states is the recent peace talks in Tashkent and a further call from Uzbekistan for additional talks.²⁶ Whether this may change under the new presidential administration is uncertain, but the recent protests following elections in the capital do not bode well for Kazakhstan as a stable partner for the United States.²⁷

Tajikistan. Tajikistan has shown a strong desire to partner with the United States under President Emomali Rahmon.²⁸ However, since the end of its civil war in 1997, Rahmon has consolidated his power through authoritarian rule.²⁹ This extends to all aspects of life in Tajikistan, as the country has fallen into further poverty. Religious freedom is nearly nonexistent; Rahmon considers devout Muslims an extremist threat.³⁰ Tajikistan further houses a permanent Russian military base, which may preclude significant cooperation.³¹ Simply put, Tajikistan's meager economic means, expansive corruption, and authoritarian rule make it a risky gamble for the United States for stable, long-term partnership-building.³²

Kyrgyz Republic. The Kyrgyz Republic, in the past, provided a key example of a post-Soviet state seeking to work more closely with the West. In the early years of U.S. efforts in Afghanistan, the Kyrgyz government allowed the U.S. military use of Manas International Airport. However, relations soured following several incidents, the most recent of which saw the arrest and detainment for eight months of two Kyrgyzstani citizens who worked at the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek. The United States has accordingly cut off military aid and appears to have given up, for the time being, on closer military relations with the Kyrgyz Republic.³³ Although the Kyrgyz government, under the leadership of its new president, Sooronbay Jeenbekov, appears to be showing signs of seeking reconciliation, the recent relations and freeze in aid makes any argument of forging a closer military relationship with Kyrgyzstan a tough sell.

Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan provides the least viable option among the Central Asian states for closer cooperation for a multitude of reasons. It has isolated itself from the greater world, relying on the exploitation of natural resources to keep its economy afloat.³⁴ The ruling regime has been compared to North Korea for its severity,

with a Freedom Ranking below both Afghanistan and Sudan.³⁵ The Turkmen government routinely rebuffs efforts by partners. For instance, in 2017, when all Central Asian states sent delegations to Arizona to conduct a border walk with U.S. Border Patrol in an effort to learn best practices and increase its own border control efforts, Turkmenistan was the lone missing state.

Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan appears to be breaking out of the post-Soviet mold through new leadership, revised social policies, an emerging economy, and most important, a focus on increasing the professionalism of its military.³⁶ The ruling out of other states and current wave of change leaves Uzbekistan as one of the best options for a security partner in the region. The U.S. government has slowly ramped up its focus on Uzbekistan, as indicated by an increase in VIP visits to the country. It is therefore vital that the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) reassess its goals and outcomes accordingly.³⁷

How the United States Builds Security Partnerships

Historically, the United States has taken a multi-modal approach to military diplomacy. That is to say that the United States has a litany of tools anywhere on the spectrum from large sums of defense aid to American military hardware to American boots on the ground. While at first, this approach may seem disjointed or even chaotic, it underlines the fact that no single approach will work for every military partner. However, the inherent weakness to this approach is that although it provides many different tools to build partnerships, it does not specifically tailor programs to a country's needs and requirements. These very needs and requirements form the bedrock of a well-crafted security cooperation plan. To plan a better approach to security cooperation and military-to-military relationships, it is important to understand the framework that exists to build these relationships.

U.S. military relationships can be better understood as an umbrella within the framework of fostering foreign relations. The United States seeks to exert soft power through the State Department and other programs, but on that "rainy day," it still needs a strong military relationship that can protect personnel and vital interests. It is also important to cement the primary function of the U.S. military, which first and foremost exists to fight and win the country's



conflicts. However, within this concept, there is still much lateral freedom to conduct relationship building. Within the realm of formal security cooperation, there are a wealth of programs and funding available for use by foreign partners. In peacetime, this is the major tool the U.S. military uses to build partnerships. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) jointly administers these functions with the Department of State and “delivers effective, enduring, and timely partner capabilities that advance U.S. national security and foreign policy interests.”³⁸

DSCA’s programs include defense trade and arms transfers, which provide the opportunity for foreign partners to receive funding to purchase U.S. military weapons and equipment, as well as to acquire unneeded U.S. military equipment. Some notable beneficiaries of these programs are Turkey, that has purchased many missile and defense systems from the United States; Afghanistan, that recently received over one hundred Blackhawk helicopters to help its growing air corps; and of course, the thousands of armored vehicles exiting Iraq

Service members from Tajikistan, the United States, and Uzbekistan collaborate on a mission plan for a fictional scenario 13 August 2019 during Exercise Regional Cooperation 2019 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Exercise Regional Cooperation is an annual exercise to help strengthen military-to-military relationships between the United States and partners in Central and South Asia. (Photo by Sgt. Jennifer Shick, U.S. Army Reserve)

during the drawdown that were distributed to numerous partners, including those in Central Asia.³⁹

Further, DSCA provides global train-and-equip as well as institutional capacity-building programs. Under these programs, foreign partners can receive extensive training for modernizing policies, military-legal process building, and many other areas. Finally, DSCA also administers the International Military Education and Training program (IMET). IMET is an extremely valuable method for building partnerships with foreign nations’ militaries. Under IMET, foreign soldiers can receive slots to highly sought-after U.S. military courses.

For the foreign partner, this can fill gaps in its force with top-notch training, but for the United States, this means that foreign soldiers spend considerable time improving their English-language skills, learning about American culture, and seeing the level of training the United States

equipment to a partner nation creates a multiyear relationship in which U.S. trainers help the partner learn to handle and maintain the equipment. Further, if a partner is using the same equipment as the United States, then U.S. troops can work much more seamlessly with their



U.S. Army Central and the Uzbekistan army participating in Mountain Warfare Exchange August 2018 in the Forish training area, Uzbekistan. Almost the entirety of the exchange was hands-on training. Topics included various climbing and rappelling techniques, the use of mechanical assists, establishing a one-rope bridge, and methods for safely evacuating a casualty from rugged terrain. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan)

can provide. Additionally, the capabilities foreign soldiers bring back home allow for increased interoperability with U.S. troops. DSCA even openly notes that IMET can help to “build alliances for the future.”⁴⁰

Interoperability is sought throughout all these programs. This concept requires some explanation, however. A U.S. aircraft, weapon system, or communications system requires extensive training, not only for the end user but for maintainers also. This means that selling U.S.

partners in training and if the need arises, on the battlefield. In this, interoperability can be viewed as the gold standard for military partnerships.

Predictably, there are numerous cases of wasteful use of government time and money with regard to partner building.⁴¹ However, the proper application of funding programs to enhance partner relations can have dramatic effects. South Korea, with whom the United States has a comparatively strong relationship,

is an example of a partner nation that has benefited greatly from funding for equipment, training from U.S. specialists, and joint training exercises.⁴² The inherent interoperability that this training stimulates should not be underestimated. While many point out the inherent risk involved in sending lethal aid and combat training to regimes that could destabilize in the future, the United States utilizes extensive analysis to avoid unjust violence done with U.S. equipment and training.

Historical Partnership with Uzbekistan

The U.S. military has historically viewed Central Asia as a backwater, especially during times when budgets become more constricted.⁴³ This has resulted in a half-hearted military relationship with Uzbekistan. The United States committed considerable funding to Uzbekistan following the signing of the K2 use agreement in 2001.⁴⁴ However, this was more of a quid pro quo as the use of the K2 Air Base was given by the Karimov regime for free.⁴⁵ This approach makes sense considering that U.S. focus quickly shifted to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. As such, Central Asia remained neglected, and the United States missed a significant opportunity to become a key partner.

In 2015, Uzbekistan received 328 modernized armored vehicles through the EDA program.⁴⁶ This was preceded by a foreign military financing case (under the auspices of the Defense Trade and Arms Transfers program) for over two hundred night-vision devices.⁴⁷ This provides a clear indication of Uzbekistan's concentrated push toward the accomplishment of its security goals.⁴⁸ Further, a recent paper from a senior Uzbek military officer made Uzbekistan's security priorities quite clear, including building capacity and deeper security relationships.⁴⁹

Considering the shakeup of the defense and security sectors, there is an indication that Mirziyoyev wants his military leaders to not only change how they conduct business but also the way they think. Uzbekistan's Armed Forces Academy in Tashkent has brought in several foreign militaries to help diversify teaching techniques. One example of this is the establishment of a Ministry of Defense advisor (MoDA), a position that the United States has in several foreign countries. However, in Uzbekistan, the MoDA is housed at the Armed Forces Academy instead of the Ministry of Defense. This

position was established in Uzbekistan to aid the Armed Forces Academy in providing subject-matter expertise and building core competencies.⁵⁰ The previous MoDA, Dr. Bob Baumann from the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College, spent a yearlong assignment teaching, observing, and aiding the revitalization of military curriculums. He noted that although there was an initial reluctance from students and faculty to adopt the concept of instructors as curators of lesson content, students began to take to this method instead of performing as regurgitators of information.⁵¹

Uzbekistan has shown remarkable interest in navigating stability for its southern neighbor and seems to understand the complexities involved and that the process may take longer than most would like.⁵² No matter the timeline, after eighteen years of direct involvement, it is likely that the need for a secure supply chain in and out of Afghanistan will continue to be important.

During the early years of operations in Afghanistan, the United States partnered with neighboring Pakistan in order to push ground supplies to Afghanistan from the port of Karachi. Due to the deteriorating relations with Pakistan, it became vital to develop a second avenue of approach. In March 2009, for the first time, supplies transited Uzbekistan from a point of entry into northern Afghanistan.⁵³ This became the northern distribution network (NDN). While the NDN came at a time of uneasy relations with Uzbekistan, in 2011 the Senate Appropriations Committee approved an avenue for a waiver on Uzbek aid on the grounds of national security.⁵⁴ Despite the protests of certain human rights groups, many analysts noted that resuming aid to Uzbekistan would go a long way to protecting the NDN.⁵⁵ Uzbekistan continues to have a central role in the NDN, "with a majority of supplies transiting Uzbekistan as a point of entry."⁵⁶

There has been considerable military partnership with Uzbekistan since the unfreezing of relations. Since 2012 the number of military-to-military events per year has steadily increased to the point where now there is a comparable number of annual events in both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.⁵⁷ The two countries further refine their plans for specific events at an annual meeting that reviews the previous year of events and solidifies the following year's events.⁵⁸ Speaking specifically to the aforementioned goals of modernization, the United States has paid special attention to medical

exchanges and foreign military financing cases, and modern equipment for special forces, along with highly sought-after joint combined exchange training.⁵⁹

All of this marks the perfect time to capitalize on the U.S. relationship with Uzbekistan. As Mirziyoyev reforms the country, Afghanistan continues to occupy a large proportion of the DOD's bandwidth. As Uzbekistan builds, it knows it needs help. An increase from current levels of support is required to solidify a long-term relationship that will bring Uzbekistan closer to the United States, thereby helping fulfill a wide range of U.S. goals abroad.

Building a Closer Relationship with Uzbekistan

With Mirziyoyev's new direction for Uzbekistan, the United States has increased military cooperation accordingly. This has meant more partnership events, joint training events, and military aid. This shift saw a new high during the May 2018 visit of Mirziyoyev to the United States, the first Uzbek presidential visit since 2002. The visit was seen by many as an opening for the United States to return to the region as a power player and an open acknowledgment by the Mirziyoyev administration that it needed Washington for its goals of military modernization and social revitalization.⁶⁰ Among other topics discussed during the visit, Mirziyoyev spoke with U.S. officials on military equipment acquisition.⁶¹

Quite naturally, cooperation efforts by the United States will always have to contend with other geographical realities. The U.S. approach will constantly need to be adjusted as the balance of power continues to shift across the globe. Contending with Russian and Chinese influence in Central Asia must not be forgotten amidst all the other hotspots around the globe. This was concisely noted by Gen. Joseph Votel, former commander of U.S. Central Command, in his posture statement before the U.S. Senate when he said that Russia "also maintains significant influence in Central Asia, where countries of the former-Soviet Union rely on Russia to varying degrees for their economic and security needs."⁶² And further, regarding Uzbekistan, "our bilateral relations serve to counter Russian and Chinese influence in the region."⁶³

One issue of note that should not be neglected is the historical weakness of U.S. military personnel knowledge on host-nation history and culture. Specifically,

in Central Asia, this means a firm understanding of Islam and an understanding of how the military interacts in the public and private space with religion. Most Central Asian Muslims are followers of the moderate Hanafi school, which favors an adaptive and innovative approach to Islam.⁶⁴ Recent developments in Central Asia have seen a rising population of young, energetic Muslims who feel that "Islam is applicable to every aspect of life. It is a fluid and unsystematic set of beliefs that is open to change and adaptation in accordance to local conditions."⁶⁵ However, Russia's Soviet past immediately causes some hesitation on the part of modern Central Asians regarding religion due to the antireligious leaning of Soviet philosophy. China not only has a history of suppressing religion but even today has also taken a suspicious approach to the Central Asian-adjacent, Muslim-Uyghur populations of its Xinxiang Province.

Additionally, the past divide between what the United States considers acceptable behavior and what local governments consider acceptable governance has been problematic. The West tends to view human rights as universal, while many in Central Asia view them as culturally relative.⁶⁶ International norms that are considered contradictory to local cultural and social values are commonly resisted.⁶⁷ This is not to say that the United States should simply abandon its values. Instead, it should take note of and appreciate modest improvements from its partners around the globe as they strive, however slowly, for stability and safety while not abandoning the values that they consider important. These issues notwithstanding, the preceding discussion paints a picture of a nation that is not only ready for change but also ready for more Western involvement and partnership.

Outcomes

As other Central Asian countries see positive outcomes and increased stability as a result of closer work with the United States, they may seek to replicate these results for their own benefit. In the context of the current poor relations with Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan's transitional issues, stability and increased focus from an outside partner might be timely. This in turn might cause a natural shift closer to a U.S. sphere of influence. The United States, for its part, would need to continue sustaining focus on the region, which this article argues to be prudent due to the common military dictum that anything can be surged for the military, from equipment

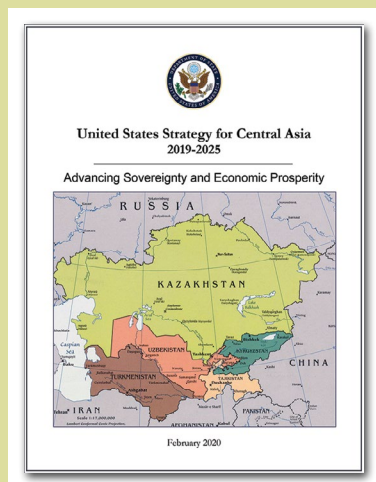
to money to troops. What cannot be surged is relationships. By fostering the Uzbek relationship and allowing further cooperation with other regional players, the United States would see its investment in Uzbekistan pay dividends beyond Uzbek borders.

Further, improved relations in the region would signal to the wider world that the United States not only espouses the concepts of partnership, teamwork, democratization, human rights, and rule of law, but that it is also ready and willing to put adequate funding behind it and push for positive gains in the region. Fostering relationships in a region that may become more aligned and invested in the West in a military sense is a major goal of countless U.S. military programs. This interoperability, as previously discussed, not only means a long-term relationship with partners but also an ability to work closer with partners in peacetime and in war. The power of interoperability should not be difficult to understand, as a close military relationship can easily use interoperability as its foundation.⁶⁸

States. In the current age of reduced budgets, this modest addition is an easy win for the DOD's bottom line.

The United States is especially interested in a partner that is willing to invest in a solution in Afghanistan where mutual interest in border security, counterterrorism, and containing instability intertwine.⁶⁹ For geographical reasons, Kazakhstan is unlikely to play the required part, despite its relatively strong military might. Economic constraints preclude Tajikistan despite its desire. Poor relations with Kyrgyzstan make it a difficult sell, and Turkmenistan is not in a position that makes it a viable option for military collaboration due to its policy of "positive neutrality."⁷⁰ While Uzbekistan is not willing to commit troops for any action outside its sovereign borders, it is invested in a peaceful resolution in Afghanistan.⁷¹

As major powers seek to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian vision, including Central Asia, they will utilize whatever means are at their disposal to bend the region to their whim. China is using its considerable economic strength to carve out influ-



United States Strategy for Central Asia 2019-2025

Advancing Sovereignty and Economic Prosperity

The United States was among the first countries to welcome the independence of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, and it has worked consistently over the last three decades to support the security, development, and prosperity of each of these countries. Central Asia has always been the strategic and commercial crossroad of civilizations between Europe and Asia. The United States' strategic interest in this region is to build a more stable and prosperous Central Asia that is free to pursue political, economic, and security interests with a variety of partners on its own terms; is connected to global markets and open to international investment; and has strong, democratic institutions, rule of law, and respect for human rights. To read more about the U.S. strategy in Central Asia, please visit <https://uz.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/78/United-States-Strategy-for-Central-Asia-2019-2025.pdf>.

Difficulties arise surrounding the issue of adjusting military funding in the region; more specifically, it is difficult to decide how to treat this action without further study. However, what seems clear is that the extremely high funding for Kazakhstan may not be yielding the results that the United States is looking for. A modest addition in funding to Uzbekistan could yield much more significant results, while at the same time, would not mean a major increase in expenditures for the United

ence in the region, most notably through its Belt and Road Initiative projects that seek to increase monetary flow, increase Chinese support in the region, and better connect the East and West.⁷² The concern among many in the military and diplomatic sector is the alarming leverage that China exerts on a growing number of developing countries.⁷³ Russia seeks to flex its muscles and regain its status as a first-tier world power. Russia has made inroads in this endeavor

through disinformation, illegal land seizures, and a shift to fierce nationalism. While eliminating Russian or Chinese influence in the region is a fool's errand and should not be the goal, furthering American military influence in the region through a targeted, long-term partnership with Uzbekistan could reduce Russian and Chinese influence.

For all the logical reasons and possible outcomes, Uzbekistan and the Central Asian region should remain important to U.S. military leaders even long after a future stability is navigated in Afghanistan. As Gen. Lloyd Austin, former commander of U.S. Central Command, argued in 2014, "By improving upon our

military-to-military relationships we will be better able to maintain access and influence [and] counter malign activity."⁷⁴ The United States appears to be at a crossroads where its policy and commitment toward Central Asia should be further clarified. While many analysts around the globe have espoused assorted views, the one that rings most true is from a senior diplomat who recently said that it is vital that we "rethink Uzbekistan." This seems particularly apropos in the military context currently, as the United States looks forward to what posture it will take in the coming years and which partners will help the United States realize its mutually beneficial military goals. ■

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The People's Republic of China has made it clear that it intends to annex Taiwan, and, if necessary, will seize the island by force. *Military Review* is soliciting articles regarding this potentially volatile situation between China, Taiwan, and the international community, and how the United States should respond. Papers could address but are not limited to the following topics:

- What domestic and international conditions must emerge to present China with its best opportunity to attempt a forced annexation of Taiwan? What other impetus might trigger such an attempt?
- How has China been preparing diplomatically, informationally, and economically to foster the conditions for such an attempt?

- How might the conflict unfold? What kind of forces would China likely use and where? How long would China calculate the conflict lasting?
- What would China need to accomplish annexation without letting the situation expand into a larger conflict?
- What is the likelihood of the United States and Taiwan's few global allies coming to Taiwan's assistance?

Accepted papers will either be published immediately as a *Military Review* online exclusive article or in a future 2020 edition of *Military Review*. For information regarding submission criteria and guidelines, please visit <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/MR-Article-Submission-Guide/>.

Call for papers submission deadline is 4 May 2020

“No one and no force will be able to stop the course” of China's annexation of Taiwan, Wei said at the security conference in Beijing, which featured a theme this year of “Maintaining International Order and Promoting Peace in the Asia-Pacific,” said Wei Fenghe. China “will never allow the separatists for Taiwan independence to take their chances or any external forces to interfere into the Taiwan affairs,” he added. “Reunification of the motherland is a justified course and separatist activities are doomed to failure.”

Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe,
The 9th Beijing Xiangshan Forum,
21 October 2019



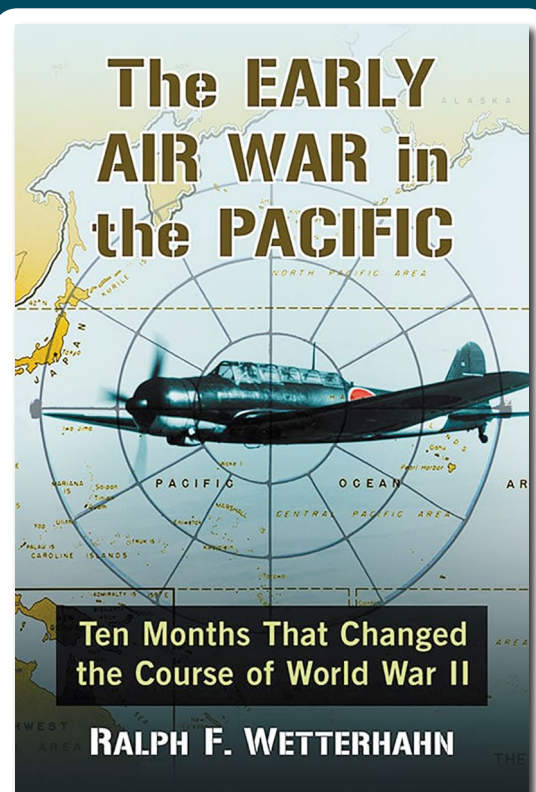
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REVIEW ESSAY

The Early Air War in the Pacific

Ten Months That Changed the Course of World War II

Ralph Wetterhahn, McFarland, Jefferson,
North Carolina, 2019, 319 pages



Lt. Col. Jesse McIntyre III, U.S. Army, Retired

The Allies were on the verge of defeat in the Pacific following the Japanese attacks 7–8 December 1941. The United States was reeling from devastating attacks on Pearl Harbor, the Philippine Islands, and Wake Island. Three days later, a Japanese air attack would sink HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* off the coast of present-day Malaysia. Japan quickly occupied French Indochina, Thailand, the Dutch East Indies, and the Philippine Islands. Over the next ten months, Japan appeared invincible as its empire had increased from 655,000 square miles to approximately 1.6 million square

miles. Former fighter pilot and retired colonel Ralph Wetterhahn offers fresh analysis of that dire situation in *The Early Air War in the Pacific*.

Wetterhahn describes how Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto's love of gambling played into the planning for the attack on Pearl Harbor. Yamamoto believed that Pearl Harbor and Singapore were the only two locations of credible Allied military power in the Pacific, and its forces in the rest of the Pacific would quickly crumble if these two sites were neutralized by the Japanese navy. Attacking Pearl Harbor and Singapore would bring out

the U.S. Navy where it would be destroyed in a decisive battle, much like what happened to the Russian navy at the Battle of Tsushima in 1905.

Wetterhahn chronicles Japanese attacks throughout the Pacific beginning with Pearl Harbor. He states the war in the Pacific was an aviation war and credits Japan's air superiority for its initial success in defeating Allied forces. Obsolete Allied aircraft piloted by combat-inexperienced pilots were no match against the nimble Japanese A6M Zeros piloted by battle-hardened pilots. Japan used army and navy air assets to neutralize Allied air assets, target naval forces, and support Japanese ground forces. But Wetterhahn correctly opines that the Japanese missed an opportunity to exploit anticolonial feelings of local populations who initially viewed the Japanese as liberators. Japanese racism toward other Asian populations would be quickly reflected in the brutal excesses that occurred in Malaya, the Philippines, and China.

Wetterhahn pulls no punches in his criticism of Gen. Douglas MacArthur's defense of the Philippines. MacArthur received pay as major general from the United States as well as \$33,000 from the Philippines to serve as military adviser to the Commonwealth. MacArthur was warned by Gen. Dwight Eisenhower for falsely reporting on the progress he was making on creation of a Philippine army. He continued the scheme, however, while failing to prepare Philippine military for the war that was developing around the globe. MacArthur considered the Philippine Islands a prime target and placed all units on alert on 15 November. He received an additional warning from Gen. George Marshall on 27 November that war was imminent, but MacArthur made no comprehensive preparations to defend the Philippines. He would learn at 0345 on 8 December that Pearl Harbor had been attacked but again failed to take action to prepare for a similar Japanese strike. Attacking Japanese pilots could not believe their luck when they attacked Clark Air Field on Luzon Island at 1245 and found no American resistance—some sixty bombers and fighters were neatly parked along the airfield.

Wetterhahn is equally critical of President Franklin Roosevelt. Roosevelt made numerous promises that the United States was coming to the Philippines's defense; however, these were outright lies. On 28 December, Philippine President Manuel Quezon received a cable from Roosevelt that read, "I can assure you that every

vessel available is bearing ... the strength that will eventually crush the enemy and liberate your native land."¹

But there were no ships with supplies and reinforcements moving toward the Philippines. The United States focused on its Europe First Strategy, sending supplies to Russia and the United Kingdom. Equally troubling was Roosevelt's wording of "liberate your native land," giving Quezon and MacArthur the impression that Roosevelt did not possess situational awareness of events taking place in the Philippines. In the first week of February, when Roosevelt finally informed MacArthur that no aid was forthcoming, Quezon reacted furiously, requesting Philippine independence and demanding the withdrawal of all American and Japanese forces in the Philippines.

In contrast to his scathing assessments of MacArthur and Roosevelt, Wetterhahn captures several bright spots during those dark months for the Allies in the Pacific. For example, Marines defending Wake Island put up a spirited defense that included thwarting a Japanese landing and the first sinking of a Japanese warship in World War II. A handful of Army aviators, naval ships, and ground forces continued to fight to the end. In addition, the U.S.

Navy launched two carrier task forces to conduct raids in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. These raids brought some badly needed good news for the American public while serving warning to Japan that America was still in the fight. Furthermore, a joint Australian-American naval force checked a major Japanese operation designed to occupy Port Moresby in New Guinea and Tulagi in the Solomon Islands. Wetterhahn also describes the eight seconds at Midway when a handful of Navy aviators forever ended Japanese hopes for victory in the Pacific.

Wetterhahn's research indicates Japan's quick early victories resulted in a

Lt. Col. Jesse McIntyre III, U.S. Army, retired,

is an assistant professor at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He holds a BA from the University of Missouri and an MA from Touro University. He served as the director for psychological operations policy, Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict; psychological operations officer on the Department of the Army staff; and in a variety of special operations and infantry assignments. He also instructed at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School and Center.



Military Review

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victory disease—complacency—that contributed to Japan's eventual defeat in the war. The nimble Japanese A6M Zero, which was superior to Allied fighters at the beginning of World War II, had flaws that were never rectified. Radio static caused by spark plug ignition in the Zero engine was never corrected. Zero pilots were forced to communicate with hand signals, which became problematic when Allied fighters achieved parity. The Zero also lacked armor plating and self-sealing fuel tanks. Moreover, the Japanese navy lacked adequate shipboard radio equipment. Wetterhahn attributes Japan's eventual failure to aircrews and the Japanese navy for not demanding improvements to these deficiencies. Contrast this with the Allies who continually applied all their lessons learned toward improving their doctrine and equipment.

Of great interest, Wetterhahn details an extraordinary dogfight between Japanese ace Saburo Sakai and American pilot Pug Southerland over Guadalcanal and describes an expedition to the Philippines where U.S. Army Lt. Earl Stone engaged Japanese Sgt. Toshisada Kurosawa over Bataan. Readers will find the latter a heartwarming story where a man fulfills a promise to bring a brother home.

A strength of *The Early Air War in the Pacific* is Wetterhahn's experience as a combat fighter pilot, from which he draws to give the reader the feel of aerial combat. Wetterhahn's research is extensive, reflecting numerous primary and secondary sources that include both Allied and Japanese perspectives, unit histories, personal letters and diaries, interviews with participants, and media reports. *The Early Air War in the Pacific* is highly recommended for naval aviators and World War II enthusiasts, as well as those seeking a casual weekend read. ■

Note

1. Ralph F. Wetterhahn, *The Early Air War in the Pacific: Ten Months That Changes the Course of World War II* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2019), 114.

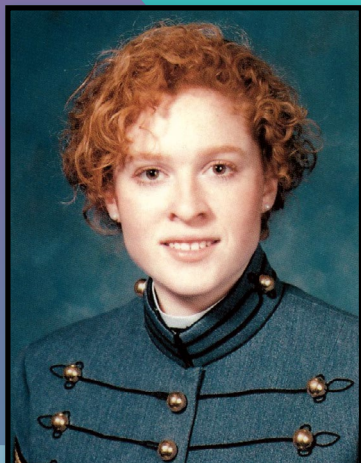
CONGRATULATIONS ON RETIREMENT

Col. Katherine Guttormsen

We sadly bid farewell to Col. Kate Guttormsen, the director of the Army University Press and the editor in chief of *Military Review*, as she retires from the Army after twenty-four years of exceptional military service.

For two and a half years, Col. Guttormsen provided great vision and leadership to this dynamic organization. She spearheaded astute changes—to include the additions of a social/multimedia team and a historical documentary team—to ensure the continued high level of support expected from the media arm of the Army University. Moreover, her emphasis on social media has allowed *Military Review* to reach out to younger generations of soldiers while maintaining the relevant content that makes it popular with those more senior.

We will miss Col. Guttormsen's professional yet personable, caring, and approachable leadership style. We wish her great happiness as a civilian and a veteran, and success in all future endeavors!



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PB-100-20-03/04

Headquarters, Department of the Army

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